Weird Tales

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

THE PEOPLE OF THE COMET

By AUSTIN HALL

Begins in This Issue

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September, 1923—25c

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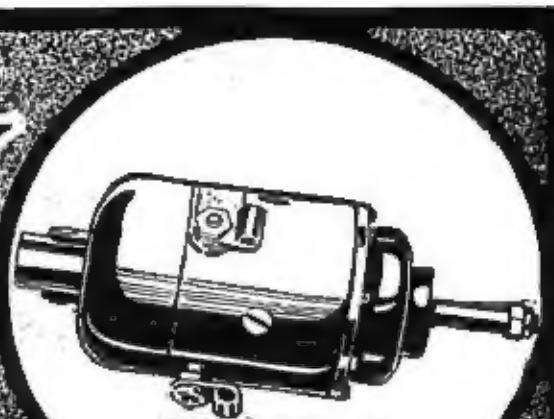

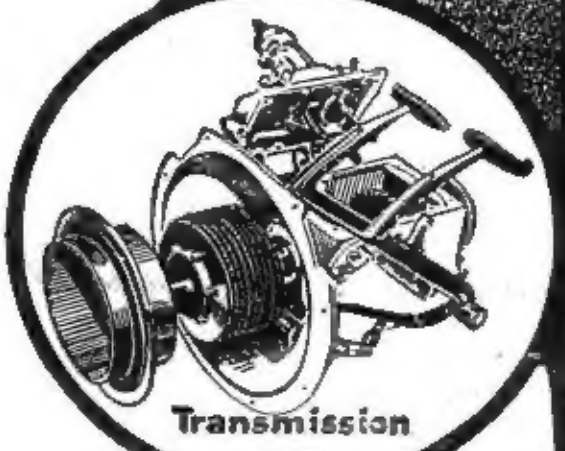

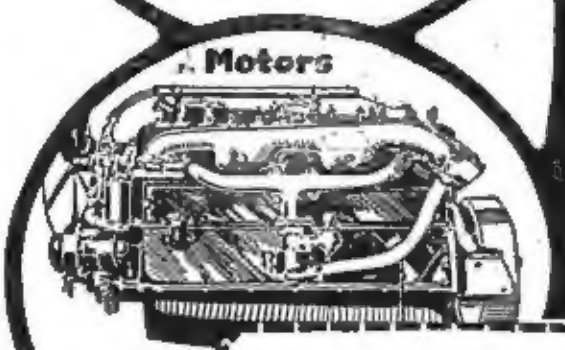

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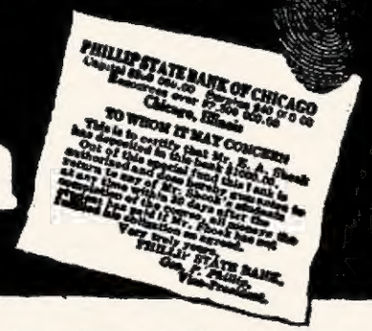

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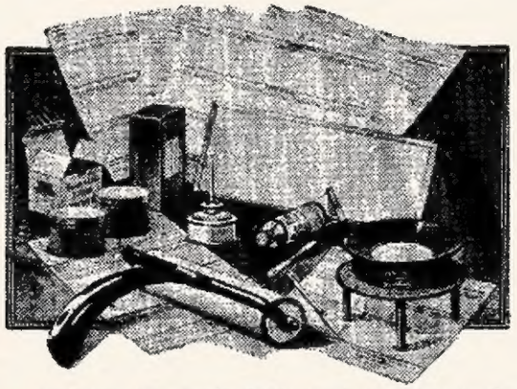

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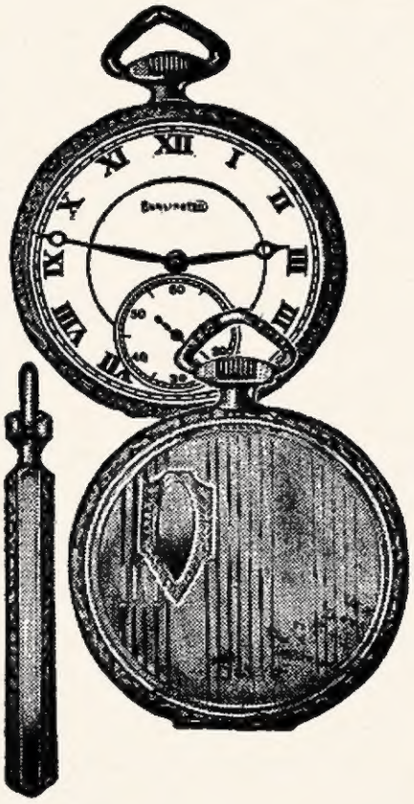

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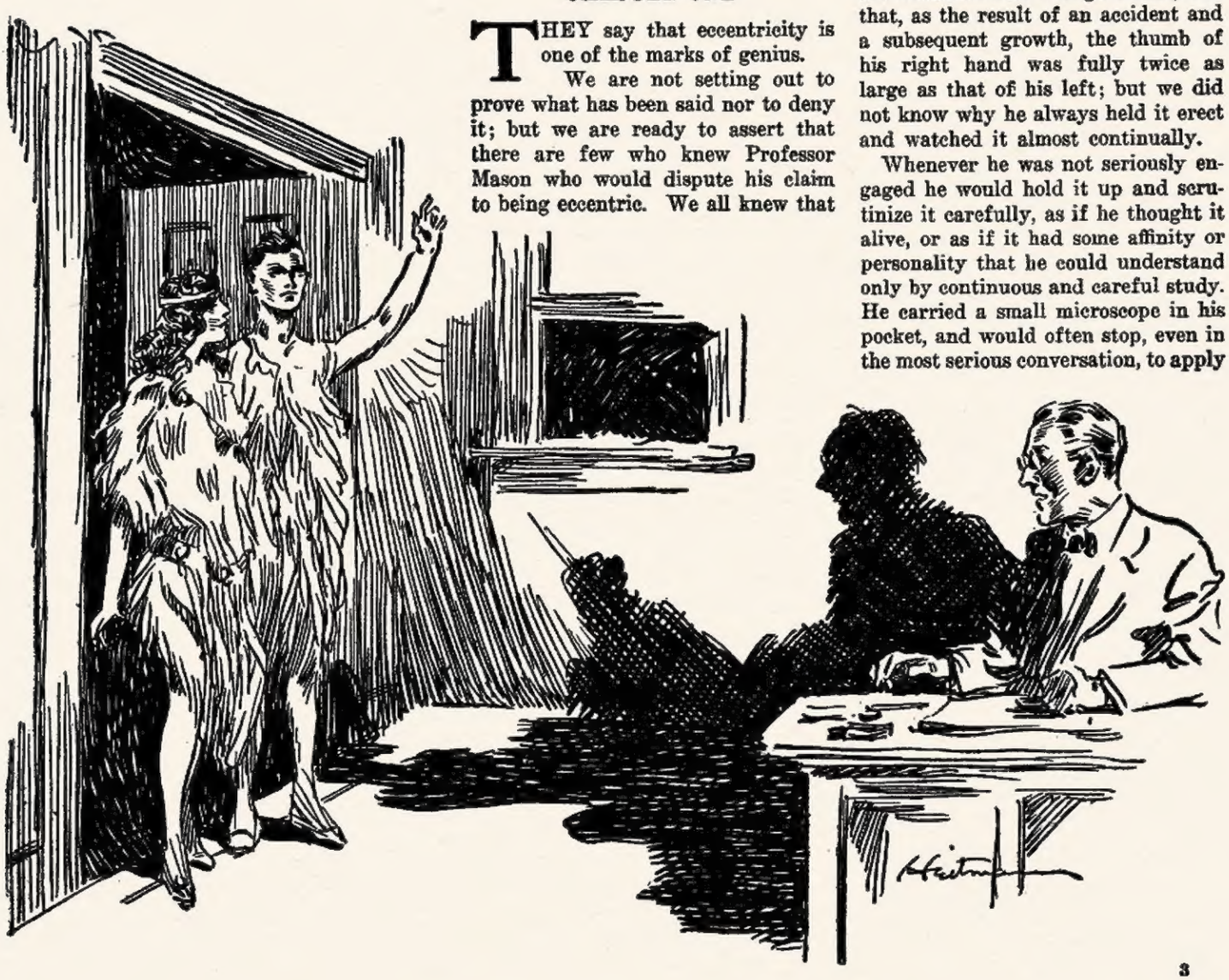
A Fantastic New Novel Filled with Amazing Adventures in Another World

The People of the Comet

By AUSTIN HALL



CHAPTER ONE

THEY say that eccentricity is one of the marks of genius.

We are not setting out to prove what has been said nor to deny it; but we are ready to assert that there are few who knew Professor Mason who would dispute his claim to being eccentric. We all knew that the Professor had a large thumb, and that, as the result of an accident and a subsequent growth, the thumb of his right hand was fully twice as large as that of his left; but we did not know why he always held it erect and watched it almost continually.

Whenever he was not seriously engaged he would hold it up and scrutinize it carefully, as if he thought it alive, or as if it had some affinity or personality that he could understand only by continuous and careful study. He carried a small microscope in his pocket, and would often stop, even in the most serious conversation, to apply

the lens, and would study, for minutes at a time, the lines and depressions of the distorted digit.

At such moments his looks would be far away, speculative, and of such an abstraction that even questions of importance would not avail to regain his attention. It was an eccentricity that was a bit expensive, inasmuch as it cost him friends; and lost him the respect of some of his equally grave and respected colleagues. I have heard one say:

"What! Professor Mason! That old codger! He is either insane, or else he is downright insulting. All he thinks about is his thumb. Last night, when we were together, we began a discussion concerning the frequency of parabolic orbits of comets, and I had arrived right down to the ratio between those of the parabolic and those of the elliptic when, of a sudden, out came that microscope. Yes, sir! Right in the middle of my talk, just when I was getting interested, and for an hour that old fool sat there looking at his thumb. When I left, at last, he did not know that I was leaving. Perhaps he is peering at it yet."

"Still," I ventured, "no doubt he has reason. There is a reason for everything, you know. Professor Mason is not quite a fool."

"He isn't!"—with a snort—"Well, perhaps I am, then."

"You say you were talking about comets?"

"Yes. Concerning the frequency of parabolic orbits thereof. But tell me: what's a thumb got to do with a comet?"

That, of course, I could not answer. Who could?—even in these days of abstract science. Much less could I surmise that the old Professor had discovered, in his thumb, what he considered one of the greatest secrets of materialistic philosophy.

Professor Mason is by no means a fool. When a man of his training comes out with a statement it is well worth considering. No one has ever accused him of being anything that is not scientific. He is a man of hard facts, with no romance nor any taint of the visionary about him: he is scientific to the last degree—and practical. Certainly none of us imagined what he had discovered in his thumb—and it was unguessable that it had to do with a comet.

It was that chance conversation with a friend that aroused my curiosity. And it brought me back to the realization that there is no law for a coincidence. A coincidence is a fact—and as such it stands out by itself with no law, nor reason, nor formulated rule whatever—an entity out of the abstract that stands as a unit—a thing that happens. I took it as a coincidence that my friend had run afoul of the old Professor's comet—for, be it known, I myself had been insulted and ignored in exactly the same manner: and not once, but three times during the previous fortnight. It was really curdling to friendship to have the old professor pull out that microscope just when you were in the most interesting part of your talk, and go peering at his thumb.

But there was one thing that I had not noticed until my friend had spoken. And afterward I repeated to myself the question he had asked me:

"What has a thumb to do with a comet?"

For therein lay the coincidence. I recalled that on each of the occasions I had inadvertently fallen into a digression on comets. The mere mention of Halley or Donati was sufficient to spring the lense from the pocket. I can see the old man yet—his eyes focused, his attention riveted, and the furrows on his forehead, deep under the locks of his fine gray hair. There was something uncanny and weird about his action: something indefinite and unknown—as if he were gazing into a secret as intangible and immense as the nebulous mysteries of the Milky Way.

I don't believe that any man, gazing through a telescope for the first time, ever looked more appalled than did the Professor when looking through that microscope. There was something weird about his action that made you feel cold. Perhaps it was the silence—for, with no sound but the hum of the night world, and the ticking of the clock, you could not but feel lonely.

And you would feel like a fool sitting there by yourself: you were ignored as if you were impossible, and as if the old man had been whiffed, on the wings of a word, into another world. He would sit still, graven like a stone, rigid as steel, hypnotized as it were: as if life had suddenly flitted and had sniffed out his personality—his silver beard touching the table but never moving, his thumb held up, his eyes steady, and as unwinking as a cat's. After a while you would go.

On the last occasion I had met Mrs. Mason. She came out on the porch just as I was leaving: she had her hands clasped before her.

"Doctor Howard!"

She was a beautiful old lady; a wee thing with a kindly face—one of these old ladies who remind you of your boyhood's grandmother—the kind you love. On this night I saw that she was worried. Something was wrong.

"What is it, Mrs. Mason?"

"Oh!" she said. "Doctor Howard. Something has happened. Can you tell me what is the matter with Philip?"

She seemed terribly perturbed, and she was such a gentle old soul. My heart went out to her. Besides, her words seemed to supplement the actions of the Professor. I had known her since boyhood—and I loved her.

"What has happened to Professor Mason?" I asked,

She wrung her hands.

"That's what I wanted to ask you," she said. "I thought you might know. It is his thumb. Something—something has happened to his thumb. It is terrible. Whenever he has the chance he does that—See?—" she led me to the door. "See? There he is now. He does that all the time, even as he used to watch for comets."

It alarmed me. At first I had thought that the Professor was overworked. I remembered that he was almost at the age of retirement, and that he had been, all his life, an indefatigable student. I resolved that I would bring it up with my colleagues, and that I would send my wife over to Mrs. Mason.

But here was a new angle. The words of the Professor's critic had aroused in me a train of thoughts that promised fruition. Now that I got down to it I recalled that comets had, on each occasion been the key to the Professor's aberration. Of course, I had no idea that there exists an affinity, much less a law—and I think that you will allow that no man had, hitherto, ever dreamed that there is a law between a thumb and a comet.

Nevertheless it had aroused me. I would go straight to the Professor, spring right off into a discussion of comets—which by the way, is the Professor's specialty—and if he lapsed again, I would compel him, even by force, to divulge his secret. In a few minutes I had on my coat and was on my way to the observatory.

It was a fine night: and as I looked down from the mountain I could sense the mist that I knew lay like a sea far below me. There was just the suggestion of a breeze; overhead were the stars that had been my life study, stretching away into the immensity that seems to go on forever.

Much as I knew about them, it was still so little—except the one fact that we would never know their secret. We might build telescopes and reflectors, and go on digging into the depths, without ever discovering what we were after. Little did I think that the old Professor had sought for the secret of the Universe and had found it—in his thumb!

I found him just where I thought I would—in the observatory, or, to be exact, just coming out and entering his study. He greeted me kindly. Certainly he did not look like a man with an aberration; there was just a bit of humor in his eyes—and laughter. On this night he was human, loyable—my old professor. Nevertheless he carried his thumb erect, as if he were holding on its end —an object.

At first he spoke of trivialities and kept the conversation down to the ground. He seemed to realize the offense he had committed; and he seemed desirous of avoiding any mention that would throw him into his weakness. Once or twice he glanced at his thumb, and at length he placed his hand upon the table—thumb erect.

It behooved me to be deliberate. After all, I thought, though a scalpel draws blood and is ruthless, it is necessary. I would be a psychological surgeon. So I plunged heedlessly into a discussion of comets.

It was as I thought. For an instant there was a look of helplessness in the old man's eyes—a sort of wistfulness that might have been akin to fear—or then, it might have been a silent dread of offending. He seemed helpless—and, without ado, out came the microscope.

This was just what I wanted. I would know the why, and I was going to have it. I was the younger and the stronger. Without ceremony, I stepped forward and tore the lens from his fingers.

It was almost pitiful to see the old man; he looked up at me, startled, pleading almost afraid; finally he spoke:

"Doctor. I want my microscope!"

The tone of his voice was so soft and insinuating that I came near complying. It was only by effort that I hung on.

"Professor," I said, "I shall return it to you after a while. But first you must answer my question."

"Your question?"

"Just this. What has a thumb got to do with a comet?"

He was startled. He half rose in his chair; the look in his eyes turned to joy.

"Then you, too, have seen it?" he asked. "It is a fact—and it is so—I would have sworn it. It is a fact."

He sat down. His gray eyes did not move; they seemed to be looking straight through me and out into the mysteries of the night and the stars.

"What is a fact?"

"That there is a relation between a thumb and a comet."

"Come, come," I spoke. "This is getting us nowhere. That is just the question that I asked. I want you to tell me why you hold the lense to your thumb and what you have discovered—what it has to do with a comet."

His eyes shifted; he held the digit up before him; he examined it carefully before he answered:

"Would you believe me if I were to tell you?"

"Why not?"

"Because, if what I have discovered is true, I have gone farther than all our telescopes can go in a million years. There is a secret in my thumb; and if you will listen I shall tell you."

CHAPTER TWO

"DO YOU recall the eighteenth of last month? Let me ask you—did you feel an earthquake?"

"No. There was none—to my knowledge."

He stopped and studied.

"That is the strange part of it. You say there was none, and so do the others. And yet I know there was. Or rather I should say there was a disturbance. I was alone in this building when it happened. The strange part is that none of the instruments have recorded it."

"How would you account for that?"

"At first I couldn't. But after a bit of reasoning I have been able to get about it. You know that there is a whole lot that we have not charted."

"What?"

"What I mean is this—that our knowledge of the heavens is but a few years old—since the days of the Chaldeans, plus what we have been able to pick up from our knowledge of the stars, and our computations. A thing might happen now that has never occurred since the dawn of history—and it might come suddenly—unsuspected."

"But nothing has happened."

"Oh yes, there has."

"What?"

"Just what I am about to tell you. I am not sure of my ground yet, so I am going to ask you to hold the secret. Afterward we shall publish it to the world."

He stepped to the window. The moon was shining through. He studied a moment, as if he would pluck the secret from the stars; then he turned to me.

"It is so," he said. "And I am convinced; but as yet I hardly dare propound it to science. Do you know, Doctor, I am a bit sorry for astronomy. No! Do not interrupt me. What I mean is this—that we astronomers, humble as we hold ourselves, are a bit too exalted. We behold and speculate on vast distances; and, because we do, we unconsciously accept, as it were, a sort of psychological Ptolomaic theory. That is, we, as men, weigh up the Universe with ourselves, mere men, as the center; we measure distance with our intelligence—and we strive for solution. After all, our sidereal system is a very small thing."

"Small!"

"Yes, indeed; if there is truth in what I am about to tell you. I know that there is; but it came so suddenly, and was so overpowering, that it has taken me all these days to grasp it."

"And you found it in your thumb!"

He held up his hand. "Wait. I shall come to that in time. Let me tell my story.

"It was on the eighteenth of last month. If you stop and think you will recall that it was a warm night, and that it was unusually sultry; so much so that I had the windows open, and for comfort, had stripped to my shirt sleeves. I had just stepped out of the observatory and had entered this very room. I was writing an article for the *Astronomical Review*, a sort of layman's article that was intended, by the editors, for general distribution. Inasmuch as it was for the common reader, I was writing in a sort of analogous style, using comparisons, that the most uninitiated might understand. It was on comets and their probable use in the sidereal mechanism; for, as you know, I have always held our sidereal system as a composite, integral thing. When I came out of the observatory I sat down to my manuscript.

"But first I went to the window. It was a sultry night; very much so. So much so, in fact, that I experienced a slight difficulty in breathing. I looked out of the window and endeavored to get a bit of fresh air. I am not as young as I once was, and I have had several such attacks, especially in sultry weather. But on this night it was pronounced, and peculiar. I might say that there was something wrong with the air —a peculiar odor, heavy, and inert,—like the breath of a snake. And it was charged.

"I noticed this because I happened to touch or move my hand over a piece of silk by the window; and I was surprised by the resultant flicker of electricity that it evoked—I had never noticed it before. My heart seemed heavy, pregnant, expectant; and I felt a sudden flutter pulsing through my veins—like a palpitation. It was unusual, weird, intuitive. Again I looked out of the window.

"Now my sight is poor; and I blamed it, at the moment, on my defective vision. For, at the moment, the whole mountain was lighted by a rain of million pointed

lights, like myriads of fire flies, a shower of infinitesimal fire-points. And I took it to be optical because I had exactly the same feeling in my eyes that I have when I look at the sun. In fact it pained me; so that I shut them.

"When I opened them the fire points were gone. Except the odor, there was not a thing unusual; the moon was lighting the mountain-rim to the eastward; the stars were the same; and below I could see the town lights in the valley. It was almost midnight, and most of the people of our village had retired for the night. I returned to my manuscript. I was alone.

"I had just time to sit down when it happened—like an earthquake, exactly—a sort of muffled roar, then a jerk as if the Universe were putting on the brakes, and a twisting and a grinding. It was so violent that my chair was wrenched sidewise and spinning; and I was thrown to my feet. The table shunted across against the wall; and the books in the shelves shot out over the floor. For a moment I thought that the mountain was breaking to pieces. The peak of an earthquake is the last thing in the expression of helplessness.

"I rushed to the door. It was good to be outside. The air was fresh; and the peculiar snakelike stagnation was gone. It was not my first earthquake, and of course, I was not terrified. Nevertheless it was sweet and fresh in the open air; and as I was a bit overcome I remained outside for a few minutes. Then I started back to my study, intending to go from there to the observatory; when I heard a noise behind me.

"It was a peculiar sound—like some one breathing, at first—then it was like a woman's voice, dulcet, musical, sad. It was below the parapet where they had leveled off the mountain's tip when they built the observatory. Then I heard the voice of a man, reassuring and full of solicitude. They were directly below me, and inasmuch as it was nearly midnight I could not but wonder.

"Then the thought came to me that it might be none of my business. Lovers have a way of climbing mountains; and I have no doubt that there is much more fervor in courtship on a summit than at the bottom; else why these continual climbings? I returned to the study.

"I had just picked up a sheet of my manuscript when the door opened, and some one stepped into the room. There was no knocking. I looked up.

"Two people were standing at the door, a man and a maiden; and I may as well say, right here, that they were the most wonderful and perfect specimens that I have ever seen. The man was not more than twenty-seven years of age; the girl was possible eighteen or nineteen years old. The maiden was leaning on the man; and both were almost naked. At least, it seemed so when I first beheld them, for their dress was totally impossible when compared to the conventional covering of today.

"The man was covered with a mantle or tunic of beautiful purple feathers—a down as soft as that that comes from under the breast of the eider duck; his arms were bare, and likewise his legs—a splendid strapping man of almost unearthly strength and beauty—such a being as might come to a poet in the midst of a classic dream; a youth who, but for his eyes, might have stood as a model for our conception of physical perfection.

"It was his eyes that first caught me and made me rise from my chair—for they were a deep glowing mahogany—the most remarkable eyes I had ever looked into, intelligent, full-souled, superhuman. He must have been six feet two inches high, a man who, even as he stood, would have weighed well over two hundred pounds.

"He was supporting a maiden as beautiful as he, himself, was perfect—a girl of golden hair and nymphlike grace—but full-breasted, like the beauties that the Greeks put upon Olympus. Like the man, she was clothed in feathers, only they were longer and of a deeper hue of purple—a robe that reached from her knees up to the full swell of her bosom; but dropped down below the left breast, leaving it bare—a splendid creature of rare exquisite beauty and unhesitating innocence. Though her costume would not have done for a city street, it did not, in her case, seem at all immodest. Her little feet were encased in sandals wrought in silver and gold, and bound about her limbs by thongs of silklike leather.

"Surely no man had ever seen such a pair—and upon a mountain! I stepped forward. The maiden looked first at me and then at her companion; her eyes were wonderful—not mahogany but blue—blue as the tropic sea; they were full of light, the indefinable flare of passion and tenderness. There was query in her expression—as if she were beholding something that she could not understand. She clung to her lover, drawing herself behind the protection of his arm, and regarding me as if I were a creature drawn from another world, instead of a dried-up astronomer; and as if the furnishings of the study were each and every one an engine of destruction. Her fear was that of a child, her trust in her companion that of a maiden.

"The man held up his hand, pointing. There was something tragic about his action—something that I could not understand. Surely they were man and maiden! I could see that much; but, I could not understand their motive. I stepped forward.

" 'I beg pardon—but—excuse me—is there something that you wish—something that I—'

"I stopped, for I saw at once, from the incredulous and puzzled look upon their faces that they did not understand me. Whoever they were, they did not understand English. That was certain. So I tried again in French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and finally in Arabic. From my earliest youth I have made the study of language an avocation; and you know I am almost as good a philologist as I am an astronomer. After I had essayed the same attempt in the sixth language I stopped. They were both, apparently, of Caucasian extraction; and I knew from the expression upon their faces that they had heard me. Certainly they were normal; and not defective. I do not know who was the more puzzled. For a moment we all stood still.

"Now the moon was rising to the eastward—the full moon—and its light was flooding through the window; on the eastern mountains we could see its mellow disk poised like a burnished plate. The man stepped up beside me. He caught me by the shoulder, and again he pointed; this time he spoke, in a voice full of power and magnetism—a splendid, virile voice, surcharged, as it were, with authority and intuitive personality. He pointed to the ground outside.

" 'Roos?'

"Roos. The word was a strange one; but somehow it had a familiar ring. I had spoken in several languages; and now I was being addressed in a tongue that I could not understand. I had essayed my question in several forms; I had one remaining—Sanscrit—and the word *Roos*, so far as I knew, was not of the old mother tongue. I could only answer as I pointed to the ground.

" 'Earth.'

"But the word had no significance; he was more puzzled than ever. For some moments he watched the moon, until the ring of the disk had left the crest of the mountains and had floated up into the star-salted sky. The girl rested in the fold of his arm, waiting. She, too, watched the moon. There was something uncanny in their presence; for they were both of them as beautiful as the gods of old Hellas. They spoke together; and the man pointed at the orb. The girl

nodded. Her face was full of delight and wonder, as if she were beholding a spectacle that had long been promised. The man's voice was affirmative and emphatic, certain; even if he could not understand me; and once again he pointed at the moon. The man turned to me:

"'Mas?' He indicated the moon.

"For an instant my mind ran the gamut of several languages. *Mas? Mas?* And then it came—it was the moon—the old mother tongue, Sanscrit for the moon—*Mas!* The man was speaking Sanscrit! My heart leaped at the discovery.

"'The Moon—Mas!' I nodded. It was my first conversational effort in an almost mummified language; for a moment I was bewildered; I repeated my words; 'Yes—Mas—the Moon!'

"He smiled; again he spoke to the maiden; then he turned to me; he pointed at the ground:

"'Roos?'

"It was the same word again; evidently he meant the Earth; so I repeated my answer:

"'Earth.'

"And again we came to a deadlock. I saw that, unless we could overcome it, our conversation would get us nowhere. I was supremely interested in this wonderful couple who spoke Sanscrit. It had been a dead language for thousands of years. Who could they be? Certainly I could not account for the manner of their coming, nor for their dress, nor for their beauty. Though they were man and maiden, human like myself, there was, for all that, a vast gulf between us. I had a notion of time, somehow, a vague apprehension of a leap across the bridge of the ages.

"For a moment I thought rapidly, my mind cluttered with conjectures, all of which I thrust aside for something practical. The man spoke of the Earth, or what, to him, had apparently the same meaning; and as an astronomer the word had, to me, a special significance—a planet, a part of the solar system. I thought of the globe in the corner, and pointed.

"He was delighted. At the sight of the sphere he ran over to it and spun it upon its axis; again he spoke to the maiden, in the same language; but too rapidly for me to follow. The girl fell upon her knees and watched, while the other traced his fingers over the surface. I noticed that his search was slow and uncertain, like a school boy's first adventure with a map; and I noted, also, that most of his search was about the poles. But he was perplexed. There was something about the globe that puzzled him. Only occasionally did his face light up, and then only when he ran his fingers over some northern continent. At last he turned to me. He pointed at the sphere.

"'Roos.'

"It was not a question this time. Apparently he was satisfied on the point of the globe. *Roos* was, indeed, the Earth.

"I nodded; then, under the lead of a happy inspiration, I pointed to California.

"The name had, apparently, no meaning; but when he followed my finger he drew back; he looked up at my face; his eyes were wide, almost wild. I don't know that I have ever seen such an expression in a man's eyes— it was incredulous, almost terrified. He glanced about the room, at the books and at instruments upon the table; then he stood up. The beautiful girl by his side watched him with growing wonder. Apparently she could understand neither her companion nor myself. The man spoke, following my words, then he went into the old tongue, speaking slowly so I could follow:

"'You mean that this is California—here—that you live here!'

"He indicated my finger.

"'Exactly,' I answered. 'Here. This is California. We are here at this very moment.'

"'Impossible!'

"'Impossible? Why?' I could not understand. At first I had entertained the idea that the pair might be a couple of masqueraders out on a lark; but the language they spoke, together with their sincerity, did not allow it.

"'Why is it impossible?' I asked. 'I have been here for twenty years.'

"'It is impossible,' he answered, 'because you could not live here. You would burn. It is too far south.'

"'I do not understand you. Who are you who come here speaking an obsolete language? You are not English, nor French, nor German—yet you are Caucasian. How did you come here? What do you mean by saying that we are too far south?'

"For answer he stepped to the globe, and placed his finger on the upper part of Greenland:

"'We should be here. Life is not possible as far south as you say. It is impossible.'

"To say that I was interested is to say nothing. I could not understand. Was it possible that there was life to the north of Greenland? I stepped over to the shelf and drew down a book on Arctic exploration; I opened it at a typical illustration—an ice field—a vast expanse of heartless, frigid, piled-up icy desert.

"'That's Greenland,' I said. And to illustrate my words still further, I drew a piece of ice from the container and placed it in his hand. His jaw dropped. I felt sorry when I saw his dismay; and I had the feeling that there was a great wrong done somehow. He sat down on a chair, and in utter misery he dropped his head upon the table and covered it with his arms. The girl nestled to him; she threw one of her beautiful arms about his neck and with her hand began stroking the hair back from his forehead.

"'What is it, Alvas?' she asked. 'Is it wrong? It must be as you say. You know so much. After all that you have done, you cannot fail now. It must be as you say. You have proved everything—and now that you have come back to little things you cannot fail here. You are the greatest astronomer that ever lived.'

"An astronomer!

"'Then you are an astronomer!' I exclaimed.

"The man looked up. He took the girl in his arms, and kissed her; there was a bit of anguish in the action, like that of one who has lost everything, like that of one who, in the supreme moment, has gone down in utter defeat.

"'I am afraid that it is so, Sora,' he said. 'It must be so. There is one thing that I had thought of; but have forgotten until now. I have made a great mistake. There are things that may and may not be. It is no more than natural that I, who have found everything, should fail in the end. It is God's will. It is his rule that Man can go only just so far. I had forgotten vibration.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'Just this, dear. You and I are only a youth and a maiden. The stuff that this man placed in my hand just now is ice, or frozen water, which we could make only under process. If it is true that it is heaped about the poles it can mean but one thing—that you and I are very very, old. *Old!*'—there was a depth of despair in the word—'Our world has been buried and forgotten these millions of years! You and I are probably thirty, perhaps one hundred million years of age."

"'But it has only been a few days!'

"'I know it. We have come through the Universe and solved Infinity. Now we pay the penalty!'

CHAPTER THREE

"I LISTENED to their talk with an interest that can be imagined. Although I could understand their words, I could not, for all that, get at their meaning; and when the man spoke of Infinity I felt the return of my old askance. No man can solve Infinity, nor get at the beginning of things.

"Yet, for all that, here was a miracle, or something very near to it—there was something, some strange force that had brought the man and the maiden. Could it be that their age was to be measured by millions of years? I am an old man and a scientist; and I am given to facts; my whole life has been spent in tearing down dreams and theories and forcing all things down to the level of solid mathematics. And now I was come to this!

"I looked out of the open window at the sleeping village. It was my own mountain, with the deep shadows to the south, the round old moon floating overhead, and a slight breeze rustling from the north. A dog, one of the children's pets, was barking; from the depths of the canyon I caught the hoot of a night owl. Everything was as it should be—except these people.

"They must pay the penalty for what? For a staid astronomer I was surely having an experience!

"But now the man Alvas looked up again; he glanced curiously about the room, at the fixtures, at everything. I had the feeling, at the moment, that, should I at some far future age suddenly open my eyes upon a new civilization, I would be more curious. I noted that there was a total lack of fear in his action; he seemed to take things for granted and to assume that I was a scholar, even as he.

"'You are an astronomer?' he asked.

"'I am. This is Hazleton Observatory.'

"The girl watched the both of us; her innocent, beautiful eyes were full of question. Somehow I could not get over the notion that she was not of our world; she was too ethereal. The man studied over my words.

"'It is fortunate,' he said at length. 'Although I have made a grievous mistake it might have been worse. Fate has at least granted me a bit of good fortune. You might have been a blacksmith, a mechanic, or a tradesman; your being an astronomer assures me of at least a hearing. You will understand.'

"'I am sure I do not understand you now. You have not answered my question. Who are you?'

"'I am Alvas,' he answered. 'Alvas, King of the Northern Pole; I am Alvas the Astronomer—son of Alvas the Wise, the fourteenth king in direct line from Alvas the Great, he who was the lord of the atom, the first king of the Sansars to conquer and harness the laws of atomic force. I am Alvas the Sansar, the first of the Scientific Kings to penetrate through matter and solve the substance. I am the first man to cut through Infinity.'

"All this was like talk from Fairyland; so I answered:

"'Your titles are high-sounding and interesting; but utterly strange. I know of no land of the Sansars, nor Royal line of Alvas. All I know is that you speak Sanscrit, which is a sort of mother tongue to all Caucasian tongues—therefore you must be connected with something very ancient. I cannot understand your allusion to millions of years. No man may live so long.'

"'Yet you are an astronomer?'

"'I am.'

"'And you know of the moon—of Lunar civilization?'

"'Civilization upon the moon!'

"'Ah! Then you do not know. It is strange. What is your specialty?'

"'I make a special study of comets.'

"'Ah!' He seemed to light up with a sort of enthusiasm. He walked to the window and looked out. Then he returned; when he was directly under the light he held up his thumb. There was something strange in the action, a peculiar inquisitiveness and inspection; under the guidance of impulse, I passed him a small microscope, which, after a bit of examination, he held over his hand. It was a queer bit of acting. I could not but wonder—what could be the relation between his thumb and a comet? Suddenly he looked up.

"'You say that you specialize on comets. Can you tell me,' he asked, 'what a comet is? For instance, what is its reason in your Universe? I am asking you because I, too, specialize on comets.'

"'I don't know, exactly,' I answered. 'It's a question that is a bit difficult to answer. No man knows the reason for any part of the Universe—let alone a comet. We know that comets do not fall in with the usual laws of the solar system— their orbits are different, for instance, and their actions are somewhat irregular. I am afraid that I cannot give you a definite answer.'

"He did not reply. Instead, he fell under the influence of the microscope; the clock ticked on, while my strange visitor with the beautiful maiden by his side peered through the lens at his thumb. At last I asked irreverently, and, I am afraid, a bit perversely:

"'Has a comet anything to do with that thumb?'

"It was a boyish question for an astronomer; I felt, somehow, that I was being hoaxed; for in no other way could I explain the attention that the man gave to his thumb.

"The maiden placed her finger at the point just where the nail ran into the flesh.

"'Alvas,' she said. 'It was right here—the laws you have drawn out and evolved. It was so. Yet you say that you have made a mistake. It was so strange, and so unthought of. After so much speculation and so much thought, it turned out to be so simple. Yet how does it come that we are so old? It seems like only a few hours.'

"'I said,' he answered, 'that it was a mistake; and it was. But it is as it should be. It could not be else. The mistake was only in my calculation. Nature does not fail. And now that I have had time to think, I know that we really should be millions of years of age—were we not, the fabric of things would fall asunder.'

"'Then you were right.'

"'God is right. There is but one mighty unity down to the tiniest thing.'

"Surely this strange pair had a message to tell. I waited expectantly. As a man of sense I thought it best to listen to their story before passing judgment. Who was this king of the Northern Pole—Alvas the Sansar—the astronomer? Was it possible that I was to look into a sealed book of our planet's history? Whence came their knowledge of Sanscrit?

"My mind went back to the shadows of the beginning, and to the Darwinian theory, and to the one point wherein it seems to fail—on the specific origin of Man.

"It is a curious fact, that, in spite of all we know of evolution, we can never prove anything specific concerning the first actual appearance of Man. When we find him he is full-fledged. No science has ever been able to turn up a fact of transition. Evolution teaches; physiology, palaeontology, embryology, everything tends one way; except to the one and the main thing—we have never been able to dig up the manlike ape who is said to have been man's progenitor.

"And who were the original Aryans? They are supposed to have come down from the highlands of Asia into Europe, India, and Persia, where they became Caucasians. Who were they? Whence did they come? And who were their antecedents? The nearest approach that

we get to the secret is the old Sanscrit language. And this beautiful couple spoke Sanscrit! Was it possible that in the past there had been a wisdom and state far above our own vaunted civilization?

"I recalled the ice ages and the calamities that were visited upon the Earth before the coming of Man. The old Earth has had her vicissitudes. I could picture a great and wonderful civilization crushed by the hand of frost—the shifting of the poles—a few stragglers drifting, naked, before the avalanche of ice—millions of years. Man might have originated about the poles. We have never found his progenitor, simply because we have never looked in the right place. Was it possible?

"Whatever the tale that they had to tell, it would be interesting. I was all eagerness. A slight breeze was drifting through the open window, enough to catch in the downy feathers of their garments and to rustle in their purple softness. I wondered at their dress. Surely there was nothing on Earth like it.

"'I wish to ask you,' he said, 'concerning your life. I am Alvas, the king of the Sansars, and this is Sora, who would have been my Queen had everything turned out as I expected—were I not millions of years too late. I want you to tell me of your life.'

"'What would you know?'

"'Everything. For instance, how does it come that you live so far south? I want to know about yourself and your civilization. How old is your civilization?'

"'That depends,' I answered, 'upon what you call civilization.'

"His face clouded, and the old puzzled look came back.

"'You seem civilized,' he replied. 'Let me state it differently. How old is your history? You surely keep records, and have a knowledge of the past. How far back have you a record of Man?'

"'Recorded history goes back about six thousand years,' I replied, 'or rather, I should say, traditional history. Beyond that we have a pall of darkness; with Man upon the Earth, but no record.'

"'How far back have you been able to trace Man?'

"'About two hundred and fifty thousand years.'

"'And he—'

"'Was a savage.'

"'Oh, Alvas,' spoke up the girl, 'it has only been a few days! It cannot be! There is some mistake.'

"'There is no mistake, Sora,' he answered. 'I can explain it all in the end. Nevertheless, there has been a cataclysm of some sort.' He turned to me. 'Have you ever thought of speaking to the moon?'

"'Speaking to the moon! There is no life upon the moon. How could we speak?'

"'How do you know there is no life upon the moon?'

"'Because there is no atmosphere upon the moon. Any astronomer, even a boy, knows there is no oxygen. Life could not be—for an instant.'

"He thought for a moment; then he spoke:

"'You say there is no life there; you say that it is not possible; are you sure there is no oxygen?'

"'Quite sure.'

"'Then,' he answered, 'we are very old, indeed. And you say that Man, *your* Man, goes back only two hundred and fifty thousand years. How does it come that you and I speak the same language?'

"'I do not know,' I replied, 'but it seems that we are related, somehow. I cannot understand your statement that you are millions of years of age.'

"'It can be explained very easily,' he said. 'Have you any knowledge of atomic force?'

"'Very little,' I replied. 'Our physicists are just beginning to study into the atom. We know some of the facts, and have learned some of the laws of vibration, light, and so forth.'

"'You understand steam?'

"'Yes.'

"'Electricity?'

"'Yes.'

"'The laws of gravitation?'

"'Yes. We understand the laws; but we do not know what gravitation is, beyond a knowledge that it is everywhere, and penetrates through everything. Why do you ask these questions?'

"'Because I wish to know whether you are far enough along to understand my story. For if, as you say, there is no atmosphere upon the moon, I have been gone a very long time—according to the earthly cycle, millions of years. And yet, for all that, we have been away but a short while.'

"'Where have you been? Have you not been upon the Earth?'

"'It is a strange story that I have to tell. After I am through you will understand; and we can compare notes, and figure out what became of the civilization that I left behind—and perhaps establish some legitimate fact concerning the origin of your Man. For I have no doubt that the Sansars were your progenitors. There must have been some calamity to overthrow the civilization of the Northern Pole—some terrible cataclysm that destroyed all but a few survivors; it seems incredible that what we worked out through millions of years should go for naught. They must have wandered southward and lapsed into savagery. Have you ever found any traces of civilization, cities and such, about the Northern Pole?'

"'My dear sir,' I answered, 'we know practically nothing about the North. Beyond the Arctic Circle we may penetrate only with great hardship. If there is a vestige of the past it is buried under tons of ice; and we don't know where to find it.'

"'But you have explained the stars?'

"He seemed to leap from one question to another with bewildering facility.

"'Explained them?'

"'You know what they are, of course—their reason?'

"'I am afraid that we do not—that is, if you mean their reason in space, their relation to Infinity.'

"We were standing close together; the man was almost by my side; he still held the microscope in his hand. When I gave him my last answer, he reached over suddenly and caught hold of my thumb. He held it up. I did not resist.

"'Suppose I were to tell you that you had the secret of things and held the reason of your visual Universe in your thumb. What would you say?'

"'I would say that you are very unscientific. Surely you would not expect me to descend to nonsense.'

"He smiled. 'Undoubtedly. But I venture to say that you will agree with me that most of the things, which you consider inexplicable, are found, when analyzed and got at from the bottom, to be very simple. It is so with your visual Universe; and, paradoxically, when I am through you shall know that, though it is a very small thing, it is, for all that, infinitely beyond anything that you may imagine. If you understand anything about atomic law you can follow and understand my story.'

CHAPTER FOUR

HE SAT down on a chair that I had brought forward. The girl took her seat beside him. And then he began his tale.

"'I am Alvas the Sansar,' he began, 'Alvas the Astronomer, the King of the Sansars, the fourteenth in direct line from the Great Alvas, he who was the first lord of the atom. My people were a great people inhabiting the region of the Northern Pole.

"'If I lapse into the present, remember that it is because it is hard for me to realize that all I have to tell is millions of years in the past. Nevertheless it is so; and I shall be able to explain it.'

"He turned to the globe and put his finger on the spot that I had called Greenland.

"'If you will look at this globe you will observe that there is a great deal of land in the North. The continent which you have called Greenland reaches close to the Pole itself; and in my day extended to and beyond the Pole as far south as the seventieth degree, and was fringed on the opposite side by a number of islands, of which this,' he pointed to Nova Zembla, 'might have been one. Still farther south were the great continents, the torrid lands of the south, teeeming with terrible life, pestilence, steaming heat, and sudden death—regions which we could circle, but which we could penetrate only at the penalty of certain destruction. All our life was clustered about the Pole.

"'This was due to a very simple fact of planetary evolution. The Earth, when it cooled, allowed life at the poles before anywhere else; when the rest of the Earth was a swirl of steam, when the crust of the equator was a mass of fire, the temperature of the poles, alone, was of sufficient coolness to allow the beginnings of life.

"'We know that the first life upon the Earth was about the poles. We know also, that, before the beginning of life, the Earth was a ball of fire. It is a part of the solar system, and much like the sun about which it rotates. We know that uncounted ages must have elapsed before the planet had cooled sufficiently to allow the hot vapors to condense and settle into the hollows to form the oceans. In the first ages the whole Earth must have been surrounded and enveloped by an immense pall of vapor through which the sun could not penetrate, and under which the Earth lay swaddled for eons, warmed by its own heat and entirely independent of anything external. In the first ages, then, the poles were much like the equator. There was no sun—only a half light, and moisture dripping never ceasingly from the everlasting clouds. It was an age of mushroom-like vegetation; but of very little animal life.

"'Then came the sun.

"'The pall of vapor broke and descended into the seas; and life began to appear and to roam over the face of the Earth. And when the sun first broke through, it was not a question of how much heat; but of how little. Naturally, the first place where life was possible was at the poles.

"'Thus we accounted for the beginning.'

"'I understand,' I answered, 'most of our astronomers accept it even today. Life was certainly possible at the Poles before anywhere else. But I don't recall any scholar ever suggesting that we look there for the origin of Man.'

"'Why not? Surely you have traced him from the north?'

"'Come to think of it, we have. Tell me what you know. Whence came your Sansars?'

"But he shook his head.

"'That I cannot tell. I am as ignorant of the origin of our Man as you are of yours. You say that your beginnings are shrouded in mystery and obscurity. So are ours. Only, while you may trace yourselves back to the Sansars, we can look back only into the mists of the beginning.'

"'How long had you a record of your Man?' I asked.

"'Millions of years.'

"'And your civilization?'

"'Several hundred thousand years. I think our civilization was much older than yours. Though we had no record of Man in the beginning, we had, nevertheless, a written chronicle that ran back many thousands of years.'

"'And you say that all this was in the past—millions of years ago—that you are millions of years of age—and that the Caucasian races of today are your descendants?'

"'I am sure of it. You speak the Sansar language, and that is proof of the relation. If you live here'—he pointed to California—'you must be living on an Earth where the Poles are frozen; and that alone is a proof of the Time. We have been away for millions of years—though to us it seems but a number of days. Sora here,' he pointed to the girl, 'does not understand; but I can explain. Let me look at the globe.'

"He spun the sphere upon its axis; then he stopped it and traced his finger over the North of Greenland. He shook his head.

"'Some of this is familiar; but not all. The city of the Sansars should be here, very close to the pole. You have it down as sea. Farther south, where you have these islands, were the observatories, close to the Magnetic Pole. The first observatory was at the Pole itself. The city of Sansar was a metropolis of a million inhabitants. All this,' he made a sweep over the Arctic—'was rich and inhabitable, a prosperous country teeming with resource. But here,' he pointed to the North tip of North America, 'we could not go. It was too hot—.'

"'You mean, then, that in this age of which you are speaking, the Earth was cooled off only about the poles, and that what we call North America was too hot for human habitation?'

"'Exactly. We lived about the pole. There were a few, our Wise Men, for instance, who calculated against the future, when the cold would encroach, and we would have to move to the southward; but the average man considered it not. There were some, super-wise, who predicted that the time would come in the eons of the future, when the whole world would freeze up entirely, and life be impossible.'

"I nodded at this.

"'That is so,' I said. 'We have proof of that in the moon. There is no life upon the moon. And as the moon has gone so must go the Earth.'

"'Yes. That is where we got our proof of the future. But in our day the moon was inhabited.'

"'Inhabited? Then your civilization must have been greater than ours of today. How would you know? Had you means of communication with the moon?'

"'Yes. But that is a long story. We discovered its life and civilization through an accident of our wireless, which I do not care to relate now. I shall only say that there was not only life, but a great civilization upon the moon, and that the satellite was in the last stages of active planetary evolution; and had come to the point where life was possible only about the equator. Therefore, when you say that you are living here, in what you call California, I know that I have been gone a great length of time. It would take millions of years for the Earth to cool off sufficiently to permit life this far south. My people of Sansar are dead, the Northern Pole is frozen, and I return to the Earth a stranger.'

"I could but listen. Was it possible that there had been life, even civilization, upon the moon? Could it be that this man, coming out of mystery, would unriddle the past? Who of us has ever gazed at the moon, without speculating over its history, without considering what it might have been when it was a whirring planet, alive and atmospheric? Surely, it was not impossible that there had been life, even civilization!

"I recalled, further, that, although all of the white races have come sweeping out of the highlands of upper Asia, there is not, for all that, one man of the original stock left there today; and there is no one, even among the greatest scholars, who can give a satisfactory answer to the riddle of the Aryans. Like bees, they have swarmed out of the original hive in the uplands of Asia. Iberians, Greeks, Latins, Celts, Goths, Hindoos, Persians, Scandinavians, Germans, Slavs—each swarm sweeping and crowding its pre-

decessor, and each one bearing in its multitudes embryonic seeds that were to bear out in the complex fruit of modern civilization. Who were the original Aryans? No man knows. Why should I doubt the Sansars?

"'If there has been life about the North Pole,' I spoke, 'I wish you would tell me about it. Most of all I would have you tell me how it comes that you are here tonight, and what a thumb has to do with a comet.'

CHAPTER FIVE

HE TURNED to the globe, spun it upon its axis, and placed his hand upon the spot indicated as the Polar regions.

"'This,' he said, 'was Sansar, this part of the Earth that you have marked down as the region of ice. Here was the land that I left behind me and here was the home of my people. Right here on the north tip of what you call the continent of Greenland was the city of Sansar, where I was born, raised, and educated as king.

"'I am Alvas the Astronomer, the King of the Sansars, the last of the scientific kings descended from the Great Alvas, who discovered the atom. And I am here tonight, the victim, you might say, of too much research.

"'In the beginning I shall speak broadly and not go into too much detail.

"'Here lived my people, the Sansars, and here was the first life possible upon your Earth and my Earth, right here about the poles that you have forgotten.

"'We had a civilization that was very advanced. We had about everything, I think, that you have in your life today, steam, electricity, spectroscopic analysis, gravitational control, atomic force. We had newspapers, literature, art, music, science. We were a healthy, sports-loving people. We had pleasures, theatres, operas, games of all sorts, and all the other amusements that interest the healthy and the intellectual. We were strong, robust, refined.

"'Our kings were known as the Alvas, kings who devoted themselves, not to wars, but to scientific research and the education of their people. I was an Alvas, the fourteenth in direct line from the great one who had discovered the atom. My father, known as Alvas the Wise, died when I was a child, and I was reared by a group of scientists. For the Sansars were careful of their princes, and were desirous that I be raised in an atmosphere that would make me a worthy ruler. All the Alvic line had been men of science. When I was old enough I was given my choice of a specialty. I chose astronomy.

"'On the day that I came to maturity, and received my rights of kingship, I was given my degree as an astronomer.

"'I was young and full of ambition, and I entertained, I am afraid, rather wild and speculative ideas concerning the science that I had chosen as my major. I had a strong notion of my own ability, and, I must say, a rather justifiable hope that I was to surpass any of my ancestors.

"'Most of all did this apply to the Great Alvas, he who had discovered the atom. I had a theory that I had evolved out of a reckless mind, a theory that I would prove with a comet. I was certain that I could carry the discoveries of the Great Alvas out of the atom and out into the stars. I had the laws of Alvas at my hand; and I would soon have a comet. For we were approaching the days of the Blood Red Comet.

"'I had always been interested in the laws of Alvas, and I had studied carefully all of his discoveries and speculations. He was the first to solve the atom and to prove that matter is everlasting. He had shown that the atom is nothing other than a solar system entirely analogous to our sun and planets, and that there is not a particle of difference in its laws other than a variance in the degree of vibration. For instance: that the movement in an atomic world is infinitely faster than in the world that we call our own. He proved that the component units of the atom are revolving at the terrific speed of forty thousand miles a second, traveling so fast as to be beyond human conception; and he demonstrated that, although revolving so fast, the separate parts of the atom are as much a cog of the Universe as our own solar system, and that each infinitesimal thing, no matter how far below human sight, is as important in the scheme of the whole as anything above it.

"'The only difference between our world and that of the atom, said he, is that we are attuned to the vibration in which we live; and that while we measure our relative time by the procession of our revolutions about the sun, we are not living a bit longer, in respect to ratio, than a mythical inhabitant of an atomic planet revolving about the nucleus (sun) of the atom. He even gave us figures. Taking 40,000 miles a second as a basis, he went into comparative values, giving a speed of 2,400,000 miles a minute, sixty times that to the hour, and twenty-four times that for one of our days; so that, granting that each revolution of their planetary world about the nucleus (sun) means a year within the atom, a single day of twenty-four hours with us would amount to 40,000 times 60 times 60 times 24, or 3,456,000,000 years within the atom.

"'And he demonstrated that it is infinitely more than that, for, instead of taking the length of the atomic planetary revolution (a thing impossible to compute) as a basis, he had used, for our understanding, merely the scale of miles per second. He made no assertion that the atomic world might be inhabited, though, for that matter, he made no statement to the contrary. Under his scheme, our solar system is but a larger unit in the sum of things that go to make up the unknown that we call the Universe. After he had formulated his speculative laws he set to work to harness the atom, and by the simple process of atomic explosion gave us the atomic engine.

"'By the time I had ascended the throne of Sansar his laws were so well established that you might say that the whole Polar civilization was based upon the principle of atomic engineering. Nevertheless, I do not think that any one before my time had ever thought of taking the laws of the atom and applying them to the stars.

"'Understand, we had attained a very high standard of civilization, and there was no one, even upon the streets, who did not regard astronomy as being the vanguard of all science. It was an age of astronomy. Every one was interested in its questions, in the moon and its inhabitants, whom we knew, but had not reached; in the planets, and in the whole continuous mystery of the solar system. For we would know the truth, not only of ourselves, but of our neighbors as well; and if possible, we would set up communication. I proposed to do it through the atom.

"'I had evolved a theory out of the discoveries of Alvas, a simple law; but one very difficult to prove. Namely, that our sun and its planets are nothing other than an atom, and that the whole scheme of visual stars is but a mere speck in the scheme of an outside Infinity, far beyond even the beginnings of imagination. In other words, I held that the people of Sansar were merely the inhabitants of a new atom, and that our sun, great as we thought it, is only an ion in relation to the vastness that is about it. And I maintained, further, that, even as the atoms below us are related, one to the other, and are bound together by one mighty force, so is our solar system bound up by cosmic law, and that our Universe is one and indivisible—Matter!

"'We had never been able to explain the cohesion of the atoms that lay below us, how they hold together, and through

speed force and vibration weave themselves into the indestructible network that we call matter. And I held that until we had the secret of the atoms' cohesion, we could never unriddle the stars. But, of course, it was impossible for us to go down into the atom and solve the mystery.

" 'And that is right where I made my point. Our solar system is, itself, an atom! Then I started my attack upon established astronomy.

" 'I maintained that our astronomers had hitherto studied the stars from an impossible angle — Infinity. And I showed that, so long as we are bound up in a Universe that centers about ourselves, we can get nowhere. It is impossible to gaze through the stars without finding more beyond them. Therefore, I maintained that we had better study the secret of our own solar atom, and find out, if possible, the secret force or cohesion that holds our solar system in its approximate relation to the rest of the stars. And I proposed to do this through the medium of a comet.

" 'My first act upon ascending the throne of Sansar was to address the council of Wise Men. I laid my plans before them; and I asked their cooperation in the great work that I had chosen —namely, to study the first comet that approached and to prove its secret. For I held that the secret of a comet is nothing other than the cohesive force that we were seeking, and that it is entirely analogous to the ionic something that holds together the atoms of matter. I would discover what a comet is composed of, and I would learn its reason.

" 'There was a great one approaching. It was called the Blood Red Comet, and though we had never seen it, we had been told by the Lunar astronomers, with whom we were in constant communication, that it was the greatest and most spectacular cometary guest that had ever visited the heavens, that its orbit covered a million years, and that it was coming from the very outskirts of Space. I would solve this comet.

" 'There was no one among the Wise Men who would not admit the possibility of my argument. We knew nothing about comets, except what we had gained through spectroscopic means, namely: a few facts of light, density, transparency, and a mass of consequent speculation. The question arose: How would I solve the comet?

" 'I went into my plans, plans that were a bit daring, and that at first startled my auditors.

" 'I proposed to visit the comet. At least, I would go close enough to solve its mystery. By means of an ether ship I would ascend from the Earth and lay in wait along its path.

" 'We had an ether ship in Sansar, an aircraft built to penetrate the ether, and designed for the special purpose of crossing to the moon. It had been under construction for a number of generations and had only recently been proved a success. It was built like a fish, with three walls, two of ajacite and one of steel, with compressed air spaces between and a layer of non-magnetic alloy coated over the steel and protected by crystalline sulphur. Ajacite is a mineral that we had discovered through our Lunar neighbors. It is the only substance that will withstand the strain of absolute zero, and the only metal that would insure against explosion when in vacuum space. For we had learned to our cost that most crafts have a tendency to explode, when above the atmosphere of the Earth, in exactly the same manner that a deep sea fish goes to pieces when brought to the surface of the ocean. Ajacite would not only resist the internal pressure, but it was impervious, as well, to all extremes of temperature; so that, while the cold outside might be five hundred degrees below the zero point, the occupant inside the ether ship would be just as comfortable as though he were walking the streets of Sansar.

" 'Inside the walls were two compartments, one for the atomic engines and the electrical machinery, and the other for the oxygen tanks and the chemical engines that would keep the air pure throughout the journey. The ship was small, not over forty feet, and there was only room enough, after deducting apparatus space, for two persons.

" 'The craft had made a number of flights; and I, myself, had risen in it, only a few days previously, to the height of more than a thousand miles above the Earth. I was certain that by its means I could approach the comet, and solve, once and for all, the mystery of cometary visitation.

" 'Such was my plan, one that may appear illusionary to you; but, in the days of advanced Sansar civilization, not at all impossible. We had the craft, engines, and other necessary means of crossing the ether. The whole problem became a question of danger to myself and the consequent extinction (if the trip proved fatal) of the scientific line of the Alvas.

" 'I overcame that very easily. By dint of argument and persuasion I won the Wise Men; and it was proclaimed throughout the world that I, Alvas, known as the Astronomer, would set out on a certain day on a cometary voyage to prove the theory of matter.

" 'At least it was so stated in the proclamation. I did not care how it was proclaimed so long as I could make the voyage. There was nothing to do now, but await the Blood Red Comet.

CHAPTER SIX

AT THIS time the people of the Sansar world knew very little about comets.

" 'A comet is the most mysterious inhabitant of the starry heavens. It is a thing of beauty. It flashes through the solar system, disobeys its planetary laws, display its million miles of glory and is gone, to return, perhaps in a certain number of years, perhaps never.

" 'No man had ever been able to understand the secret of the comet. We only knew certain facts that are manifest under an analysis of the spectrum. We knew that the light is intrinsic, that it comes from the comet itself, and not from the sun. We knew that it is composed of three parts, the head, the nucleus, and the tail. The head, or coma, of a comet, is its main visual part, a ball of transparent light; the nucleus is the bright spot of light directly behind it; and the tail is the wonderful luminous cloud that streams from the head out over the heavens. All this we knew. But we did not know what composes the comet in any of its parts; neither did we know its purpose; nor its reason for flashing across the firmament on its visit to the solar system.

" 'The whole Sansar world waited for the Blood Red Comet.

" 'When the lunar observatories began reporting its approach we made ready. The ether ship was gone over for the last time and every detail scrupulously overhauled. The Wise Men and the Astronomers haunted the observatories while we waited the terrible visitor. We had been warned that it was the most awesome and terrible guest that had ever visited the heavens. The moon with its stronger telescopes and more advanced civilization located it first.

" 'Then we picked it up. At first it was barely perceptible, a mere glimmering of red, no larger than a pinpoint— like a star of the faintest magnitude. Then it grew larger, running up through all the magnitudes, until it had surpassed the first and had passed into planetary brightness. In a few nights it had so gained in size that it hung like a blood drop ready to fall from the heavens. From the very first it had a gruesome glimmer and a threat of terror; and, being a comet, it had the additional weight of mystery and omnipotence. From the Lunar observatories we learned that its orbit covered a million years, and when

we calculated the depths of Space that it had traversed it seemed to us as coming from beyond the bounds of the Universe itself. It was not only large but it was wicked; its red light winking and dripping an unholy radiance. To the people of Sansar it was the harbinger of Fate and Terror.

" 'But to me it was a thing of destiny. I watched the comet through the long nights as it approached the Earth, and as it began to throw out its tail I marveled at its beauty, like all the rest of Sansar. For it was the most marvelous and, for all that, the weirdest and most terrible sight ever beheld. In the full of the night it was as large as the moon itself, blood red, like a vast wound in the heavens, driving a trail of light across the night exactly like a train of blood. Behind the head followed the dazzling nucleus, shooting jets and concentric rings of light into the coma, which in its turn passed on the light to the long and terrible train that reddened the darkness.

" 'It was enough to frighten even an astronomer; to the ignorant it was the omen of death itself. When I say that the whole polar world went into panic I am not exaggerating.

" 'It fascinated. I had always been interested in comets; but now, when I gazed into its terrible face, I was hypnotized. I could see the thing coming out of the Infinite and proving every bit of my theory. If I could but reach the comet I was sure that I would establish one of the great laws of the Universe.

" 'The astronomers worked with me, and night upon night we studied the spectrum, took photographs, and piled up data. We went into each detail with mathematical exactness. For it was my theory that this super-comet was but an ion of cohesion. We made ready for the time when it would cross the Earth's orbit. It was planned to ascend in the ether ship forty-eight hours ahead of the moment when it would come the nearest to the Earth. With the atomic engines and the electric propeller-controls, the trip could be made in that length of time. I was to approach the comet just as closely as possible; and I was to carry instruments with me for the gathering of scientific data.

" 'The day of my departure was a great one in Sansar. The whole of the Polar population crowded in or about the metropolis, waiting for the departure of the ether ship. It had been proclaimed that I, and one companion, would make the cometary attempt on a night appointed. The roads were packed with thousands, and for a week people slept in the streets. In all the territory about there was not a spot that was not held by a shuddering, terrified inhabitant of Sansar.

" 'I planned to leave in the evening when the comet was brightest and when I had its light to guide me. By this time it had grown so immense and its redness was so intense that the whole night was bathed in a mist of unhallowed crimson.

" 'I shall never forget that night—the stillness of the air—the red sky—the throngs of people packed back from the edges of the Ether field as far as the eye could reach—the bands playing—and the solicitude of my friends and the wise men. That day was a high point in the history of Sansar. It was an epoch of the Alvas; and had I succeeded I would have surpassed by all odds any achievements of my scientific ancestors. I was not afraid. I was as confident as any youth who had ever stood upon the threshold of adventure. I had the courage of my training. If the ether could be crossed there was no doubt of my ability to approach the comet. I was not afraid of the ether.

" 'I had just forty-eight hours. I knew that with the terrific speed that the ether ship maintained through its atomic propulsion that I could reach it.

" 'My plans were mostly to sail along with the comet, once I was near it, observe the head or coma, as it is called, and, if possible, get a good glimpse of the nucleus. If it were feasible, and I could do it without destruction, I intended to land on the comet. That is, granting that it had enough of solidity and substance to guarantee a landing. For I knew that there was a possibility that I might find the comet to be merely a matter of light and electrical glory.

" 'If I could not land I would return to the Earth at one sailing. That would mean, possibly, five days. There was no telling what I might encounter; and there were a thousand dangers that I had to bear in mind. For instance, meteor storms. I might find myself in the midst of a cloud of immense pounding meteors, or I might get tangled up in some strange cometary force, unknown currents, electrical storms—what not. Any number of things might happen. If the comet's head, for instance, were composed of material matter, such as shooting particles, there was a good chance for my destruction. It were necessary that I have good control of the ether ship; for, well constructed as it was, there would be little chance, if I ventured too close, of its surviving a bombardment of bowlders traveling at the speed of cannon balls.

" 'I had to chance it. But while I was takingthe chance, I had, to a certain degree, the confidence of my calculations. I did not fear the head of the comet. I was sure that, no matter how dazzling and terrible it might be, it could not hurt me. It was the nucleus that I had to look out for. The head I took to be the effect of radiation, light—an immense coma thrown off from the parent nucleus. The nucleus is the heart of the comet, the one part that had ever defied all our calculations. The real danger was there—likewise the secret. It might be anything, and was so much of a mystery that I would wait until I could see it before I would venture an opinion. It might be fire, a great knot of electrical force, atomic explosion, radiation—anything. Perhaps in its heart I would discover the secret of cohesion.

" 'At the last moment, just before I made off, I met with my first disappointment.

" 'The ether ship had been built for the accommodation of two persons. I had expected to carry along a companion to serve as an assistant during the stress of the journey. There were long hard hours ahead. The man whom I had chosen was a noted astronomer of about my own age, a young man very eager to engage in the adventure. At the last moment I lost him.

" 'After the apparatus (scientific and otherwise) had been stored away, it was discovered that there was very little accommodation for even one person. The space was too limited. I had, therefore, the alternative of abandoning the trip altogether, or undertaking it alone. It was a sad moment, and I was not a little appalled at the prospect before me.

" 'Just before the start I stopped to take a last look at Sansar; for I knew that it might be my last moment on the Earth. Then I entered the ship, closed it, and rang the signal to my men. The next instant I was shooting like a bullet straight into the zenith.

" 'For the first few moments I staid with the controls. I had to take great care at the start because the hardest part of an ether ship's flight is through the atmosphere. Once I was beyond it I would be free from the terrible menace of atmospheric friction. For a while I was very busy.

" 'To those in Sansar my departure must have been like that of a gigantic projectile, whose whizz and momentum made any definite sight impossible. The craft arose at a right angle; and though the bottom of the ship thus automatically became the side, I experienced not a bit of inconvenience. This was because of the atomic anti-gravitational current that circulated under the floor. By the simple means of a button I had released the force that gave me the control over

my own gravitation. Had I so wished, I could have flown upside down. This was the great advantage of atomic energy. When once released into the ether, the ship was, so far as gravitation was concerned, entirely its own master.

"'I was two minutes passing through the zone of atmospheric friction. Then I struck the ether; the atomic engines giving out the strange hum that is peculiar when they are generating their own propulsion. Unless struck by an oncoming meteor, I was now in a region of comparative safety. I ventured a look down at the Earth.

"'What I beheld was a red sea of color—the Earth bathed in the crimson light. Above, spread the weird unhallowed glow of the comet. Even the moon was red. It was a strange, foreboding sight.

"'I turned to the examination of the engines and the chemical machines. Then I returned to the controls and spent the time watching the glow above me and speculating upon the movement of the speed clock.

"'In the open ether the speed of the ship was terrific. There was scarcely a limit to its maximum. I amused myself for a while by increasing and diminishing the velocity and testing by the speed clock. But I did not do it more than a dozen times. The whole voyage had been calculated to a fraction. After the first few tests I set the ship into the speed that it was to maintain throughout the voyage. After that there was nothing to do but watch and wait and spend the long hours thinking.

"'At last the clock said morning. When I looked down I was surprised, almost shocked, at the comet-lit glow that lay below me. I had never been up high enough before to get a good view of the Earth's disk. There it lay like a round red ball basking in the comet's glow. It was clouded and streaked about the torrid, burning regions, but clear and definite about the poles. I could make out the continent of Sansar; and I could judge, almost to a dot, the location of the capital city.

"'To the left was the moon, smaller, and at that distance looking for all the world like a child of the major planet. On the right I had the sun, and before me, a few degrees to the left, the oncoming comet. I reflected that with such companions I was not entirely alone; and I was elated when I thought that, of them all, I alone was free to follow my own volition. After I had satisfied myself, I had my first lunch, set the chemical machines to work to purify the air and made my first inroad upon the store of oxygen. Then I returned to my seat by the controls.

"'Nothing happened until about three o'clock. The speed clock ticked onward and the chart upon which moved the tabulated dots of the ether ship and the comet showed the terrific speed at which I was traveling. There was no sound; and there was no discomfort; though it was five hundred degrees below zero outside I was just as comfortable as though I were in Sansar. I began to doze. The ship sailed along without vibration. I was almost asleep when it happened, and I do not know to this day just what it was.

"'The silence was broken by a roar like that of distant cannon, a set of explosions, followed by a grinding, grating, phenomena. Then silence. When I looked out in my awakened senses I could see nothing; neither was there aught behind me. Whether it was a bank of small meteor particles, or some knot of unknown force traveling through the ether, I do not know. But thereafter I kept awake.

"'It was not so easy as it may seem. The hum of the atomic engines was monotonous: and though the voyage was the strangest ever undertaken by man, I found it difficult to hold to alert consciousness. But I did, mostly by keeping my mind active; and giving free rein to imagination.

"'I had enough for that. With the comet approaching I had plenty to keep me busy. What would it be like? And what would be my fate? I realized that I was taking a trip in defiance of all logical calculation. Suppose the atomic engines should refuse to function? Would I go falling through space forever? What would be my fate?

"'By the thirtieth hour the Earth had dimmed to a large star, and the moon had grown to be her twin sister. On the other hand the whole Universe seemed to be turning to comet. The coma was now as big as a wagon wheel, a vast ball of winding, whirling, crimson. I could feel its motion, and even at this distance I could sense its terror. The whole Universe was seeping red and trailing in omnipotent beauty. There was pulsation to its light, and vibration; it was like a great, monstrous, living thing, red, vast, inconceivable. Never was there such beauty of light, nor man in such a position!

"'And still I held on, watching, waiting through the long lonely hours. Surely nothing but the wildest dream and perversion of destiny could have brought me to such a climax! Everything had melted into one sea of crimson; there was nothing but red light and glory; in the center of which loomed the vast sun of the oncoming comet. What an inconceivable thing is the Universe! This incredible body coming at the speed of multiplied whirlwinds had been traveling for millions of years without ever touching the sides. Whence had it come? Where was it going?

"'The last hours were terrible. The light grew so intense that it was like looking into the sun. The coma had grown until it filled half the sky; red, whirling, pulsing, a vast whirlwind of fiery flame, a rolling sea of omnipotence. Though there was no sound within the ether ship, I could sense an undercurrent of terrific explosions. Perhaps it was my reason combating my imagination; it was almost impossible, in the face of such a moment, to retain a hold on clear thinking.

"'And still I held on, swinging to the left so that I would just miss the rim of the comet. It was my intention to let it get just so close, and then to turn and travel in the same direction until it had passed me. I would approach the comet in the same manner as a man boarding a moving vehicle—by parallel motion. And I intended to get just as close as possible.

"'I had the chart of the voyage by my side, an electric board crossed by lines indicating millions of miles, with a red light showing the path and the position of the comet and a green one indicating the course of the ether ship. When the green light had crossed into the last square I intended to reverse the ether ship and await the sequence. By this time I had lost all hold of visual calculation. There was nothing before me but one vast sea of crimson flame.

"'In the last moments I laid my plans against emergency. I knew that there would be unseen dangers, and I calculated carefully. There was the possibility of the atomic engines going to pieces and the consequent danger to the ether ship. In such a case I would have to employ electrical propulsion. I knew nothing of a comet and I was by no means certain that what was a law upon the Earth would continue so when under cometary influence. If atomic force should fail I would fall back upon electrical propulsion and vice versa. By means of electrical discharge I proposed to test out the poles of the comet (if it had such), and so, in case of mishap, guide the course of the ship. Thus, if I found the negative pole I could, by the discharge of a negative current repel the ship away from the comet. Or I could do it the other way about by the discharge of positive electricity. I could discover where the poles lay by the mere

discharge. And that is where I made my mistake.

" 'I was now approaching the line of the last square upon the chart. The comet had passed out of the visual stage and into that of immensity; before me was nothing but a sheer wall of red living flame. It was immense, dazzling, whirling; a pulsation of infinite, inconceivable forces, a blinding sea of omnipotent currents, centered into a vast hell-burning whirlpool. I was like an insect flying, head on, into the face of the sun.

" 'When I had crossed the last thousand-mile line I opened the discharge and let out the current. And that was my mistake!

" 'The next instant was one blinding, whirling, shuttle of confusion. It was like a thunderbolt, with the ether ship rolling without rudder or guidance, straight into the head of the comet. In the flash of that instant I can remember only a feeling of red, blazing helplessness and terror; there was a roar that outdid all thunder—the crashing and booming of terrific explosions, like the Universe splitting to pieces. I had released the wrong current and had been drawn straight into the comet!

" 'Thank the Lord for the flight of thought and reflex action!

" 'In that one second my mind and body knew what had happened. Though I was helpless, my trained hand did just the thing that saved me. The contrary switch was thrown. The next instant I was clear of the comet. I had made the mistake of trusting to luck and throwing out the wrong current; had I not reversed the switch and loosened a negative current I would surely have been destroyed. Though the walls of the ether ship were built of non-conducting material and were impervious to almost any extreme of heat and cold, I would not have lasted long inside that terrible coma. As it was I was thrown thousands of miles out of the comet. When I recovered my equilibrium the ether ship was sailing along like a fly in a course parallel to that of the coma.

" 'I had made a great discovery. I know now beyond all doubt, that the coma of a comet is electrical, that its light is caused by the visual discharge of electricity, coming, undoubtedly, from the nucleus.

" 'For a while I sailed along with the comet. The atomic engines were working perfectly, and the anti-gravitational current was just as effective as it had been upon the Earth. I was at right angles to the comet, and just as independent as I would have been millions of miles away. The controls were accurate.

" 'By the chart I could now see that I was traveling alongside the center of the gigantic coma. The whole Universe seemed to be painted in boiling flame. It was terrible to behold—and fascinating. It pulsed and vibrated, and rolled into billows of falling fire. It was *alive*, as if fed from within; and at every moment it broke into cataclysms of curdling blood-red brilliancy.

" 'For an hour I drove the ether ship along the edge of the coma, gathering data that I would make use of when back upon the Earth.

" 'I had proved my theory concerning the head of the comet. It was a ball of transparent light, transparent at a distance, but at close quarters brilliant beyond all imagination. It was electrical—the light o factive ions moving at terrible speed—not the speed of electrical current alone, but that of a vast consolidated body—a cometary knot of force.

" 'And yet it was not, as I had maintained, entirely harmless. I could say definitely now, that, should the head of a comet ever strike the Earth it would mean the end. Since the beginning of science our astronomers had been speculating upon the result of such a collision, some holding one view and some another. The Earth had passed several times through the tail of a comet without being harmed; there were some who held that it would be the same with the coma, or head. The nucleus was the only part that they feared.

" 'There lay the secret. Through telescopes I had watched the nucleus shoot jets and great concentric rings of light into the coma. If the head of the comet were electrical—the effect of these discharges—what was the nucleus? Whatever the comet might be, there was no one yet who had ever advanced a theory that held the weight of probability. The nucleus was the heart of the comet. I would solve its secret.

" 'To do this I had to fall back along the head of the comet until I came to the tail, of which I was not afraid because I had known from the beginning that it is nothing but a passage of weird, uncanny light. I intended to dart straight through it and sail toward the nucleus. What I would do then would depend upon circumstance.

" 'There was a good chance for my destruction. Nevertheless my mishap with the coma had increased rather than diminished my ardor. I had confidence and I had, most of all, a feeling that destiny would protect me.

" 'I eased up on the engines, held the controls, and waited while the red sea of force sailed by me. On the chart I could watch the green dot of the ether ship receding across the face of the comet. Thousands of miles! It was an expectant moment.

"The comet looked to be a few feet away; and yet I knew that it was thousands of miles from the ether ship. It was boiling crimson, cataclysmic. Never was there a thing so terrible, nor a man so fascinated. I intended to wait for the moment and then plunge into its heart.

" 'At last the coma had passed, and I knew by the chart that I had come to the tail. The intense light grew dimmer, and, though still a bright crimson, semi-transparent. After a bit I caught a glimpse of the nucleus gleaming like a ruby or violent coal directly behind the coma. It was red as blood, burning like the ruby light of a burning volcano. It was small compared to the rest of the comet, but of such an intensity that against its light the rest was as shadow. Red is a terrible color; but this red had the terror of hell!

" 'It seemed to be living; like the evil eye of some magnetic devil, winking, blinking, and shooting red fire into the onrushing coma. Great wreaths of hot splendor shot out from its rim, one upon another, a whirling, blinding, dazzle of spasmodic ascending glory.

" 'When well alongside, I speeded up the engines and turned straight in. I was not afraid of the tail; but I was going to take no great chance with the nucleus. It was too terrible—super-dynamic. If I could get close enough to see what it was like, I would be satisfied.

" 'The tail proved to be just what I expected. It was merely a trail of harmless light, through which the ether ship passed without a bit of inconvenience. If it has substance, the density of a comet's tail is so slight that one could condense a million miles into a handful. In a few minutes I was nearing the heart of the comet.

" 'I was careful now. Instead of rushing straight in, I approached by a cautious, circular route; that is, I circled to the rear of the nucleus, and then reversed and repeated the movement, always drawing closer. I found that it was small and that, instead of being massive, it was, when compared with the rest of the comet, not more than a mere dot. It could not have been more than one hundred miles in diameter, circular, and surrounded by a red band of intense color. I discovered that from the rear it was apparently harmless.

" 'I sailed up close. Then, taking courage, I drove the ether ship alongside where I could get a good view of the discharges that burst from the nucleus.

" 'I was now directly under the gigantic coma, looking down into the heart of the comet.

" 'To speak metaphorically, it was like looking into frozen fire. The flashes or ascending halos, broke from the rim of the nucleus, a circular ring whose intensity might be compared to boiling, liquid electricity. It was dazzling, blinding, incomparable—a rim of life and power whose potency can only be pictured in the extreme of imagination, a whirling, rotating wheel, out of whose depths leaped the gyrating wreaths of glory that fed into the coma.

" 'The rim of the nucleus was traveling about the center at slow speed. At first I took it to be a complete circle; but after a bit I saw that it was broken and that it did not entirely surround. It was this break that emphasized the circular movement; it was the only part that I could watch without being blinded.

" 'What was in the center of the nucleus? What was it for? I remembered my theory concerning greater matter. If it were correct, and if, as I had maintained, the sun and its planets is but a super atom, then this marvelous ring of force was but an ion. I was gazing into an ion of cohesion! That was why it defied planetary law. It had not to do with planetary law. It had not to do with our solar system alone, but with other systems as well. Its function was interstellar cohesion.

" 'Such was my theory.

" 'The flashes, I discovered, were harmless so long as they were not touched. After a bit I learned that the wreaths of current were broken like the ring. By maneuvering, I brought the ship opposite the break in the outer nucleus. I would get a good view of what might be inside. If I saw a chance I would sail straight into the comet's heart!

"The break was large—perhaps twenty miles—so that when I brought my craft to a favorable position I could get a fair view. By following the break in its rotation, I gradually accustomed my eyes tothe light within. What I saw startled me, and gave me reasons for believing that the marvelous body might, after all, be, in substance, merely a gigantic meteor. I brought the ether ship around and made for the opening.

" 'For a minute there was a blinding flash as I passed through, then a lapse, and after that a notion of heaviness. The atomic engines began giving off the hum that is peculiar when they are combating atmospheric friction. Could it be that there was air?

" 'I slowed down to mere air-plane speed. Then I looked below me for the answer.

" 'It was the greatest and most marvelous moment that I can remember. I was in the heart of the comet, and *it was alive!* Below me was spread out a varied scenery, trees, plants, diminutive mountains, lakes, a short river with a beautiful waterfall, along the banks of which strange creatures were walking and feeding.

" 'There was grass in the plains and ferns in the hollows. On the crest of the mountain was a little lake full of a pink liquid. The river bubbled out at the foot of the mountain. I approached the ground and followed the course of the river. I marveled at this little world below me. It was as natural as my own Earth.

" 'At length I approached the source of the stream, which sprang from a small forest at the foot of the hills. In front of the trees was a pile of stones heaped and built as if for habitation.

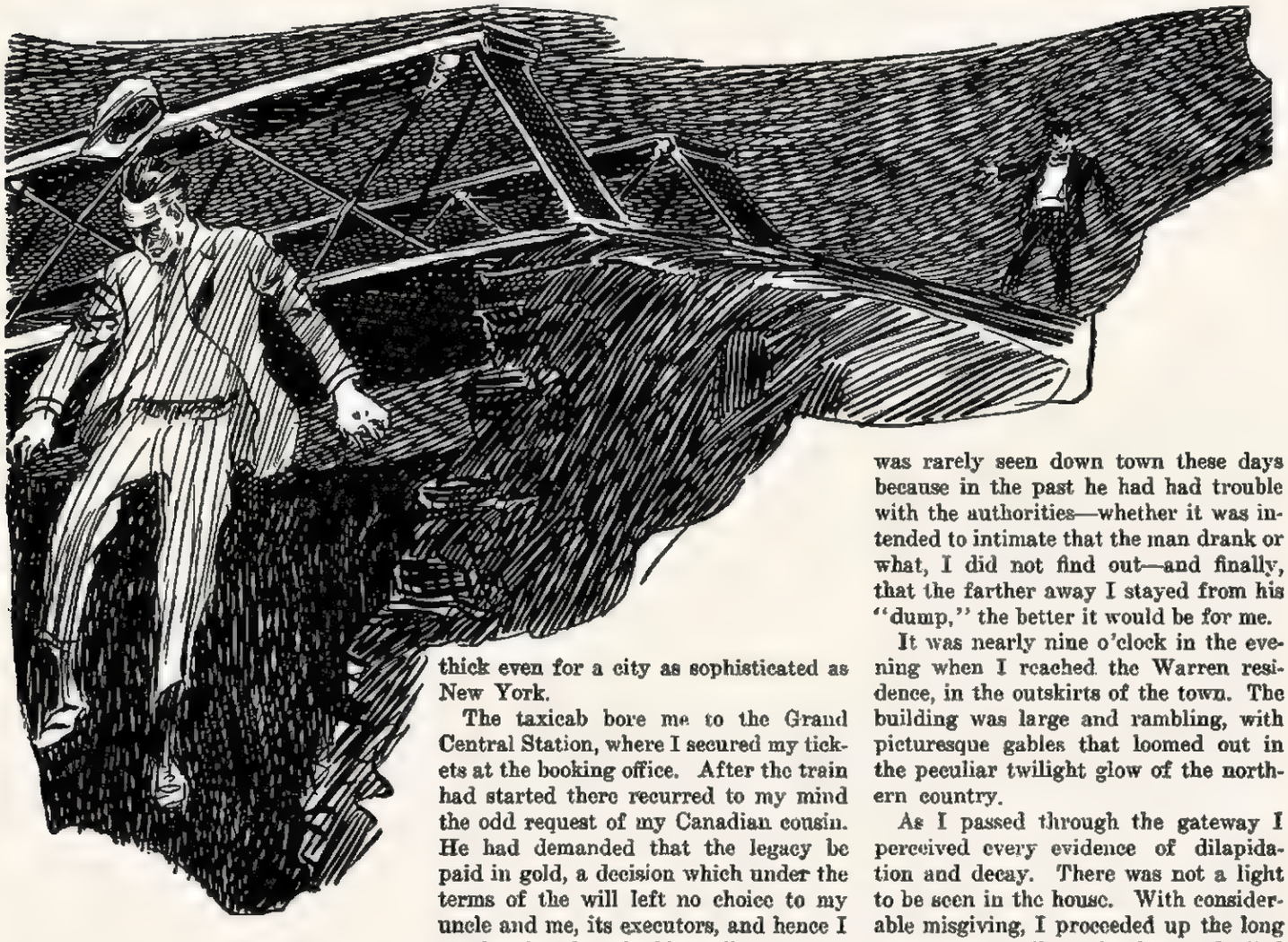
" 'And then! I caught the brakes and set the ether ship into its first full stop. For the heart of the nucleus was not only atmospheric, but it was the habitation, as well, of human beings. The pile of rocks that I had observed was indeed a residence. Before it, looking up at the ether ship, was a woman, or rather, I should say, a girl—the girl of the comet!' "

This Story Will Be Concluded in the Next Issue of WEIRD TALES. The Final Chapters Bristle With Strange Experiences Even More Engrossing Than Those in This First Installment. Don't Miss the Next WEIRD TALES.

An Odd Little Tale
By the Author of "The Well"

THE BLACK PATCH

By JULIAN KILMAN



THE dead weight about my body made me gasp as I leaped into the taxicab.

So far as my uncle and I were aware, there was only one other person who knew of my errand. He lived in a small town in the northern part of Ontario and was the sole surviving member of that branch of the Warren family which had left England three generations before. The gold coin I carried was a legacy to him, and I could not think he would have divulged the manner of its delivery.

Yet twice during the short time that had elapsed since my arrival in New York I had been attacked, and on the second occasion my bag actually snatched from me. This seemed a bit thick even for a city as sophisticated as New York.

The taxicab bore me to the Grand Central Station, where I secured my tickets at the booking office. After the train had started there recurred to my mind the odd request of my Canadian cousin. He had demanded that the legacy be paid in gold, a decision which under the terms of the will left no choice to my uncle and me, its executors, and hence I was lugging the valuable stuff on my person.

The visit to Niagara Falls was not to be given up, and nothing occurred to increase my apprehension during my stopover at the famous resort. At the end of the following day, after much discomfort from the execrable train service, I reached my destination, and hastened to a hostelry.

That evening I ascertained something of my relatives, most of my information coming from a garrulous waitress who needed but the merest hint of a question not only to answer it but to anticipate five others.

Thus it came about that I learned that David Warren, my cousin many times removed, was a "queer duck"; that he was rarely seen down town these days because in the past he had had trouble with the authorities—whether it was intended to intimate that the man drank or what, I did not find out—and finally, that the farther away I stayed from his "dump," the better it would be for me.

It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening when I reached the Warren residence, in the outskirts of the town. The building was large and rambling, with picturesque gables that loomed out in the peculiar twilight glow of the northern country.

As I passed through the gateway I perceived every evidence of dilapidation and decay. There was not a light to be seen in the house. With considerable misgiving, I proceeded up the long grass-grown walk to the door and plied the ancient knocker. No one answered. I waited a few moments, feeling less and less inclined for my task.

Suddenly the door swung open silently. I was confronted by an elderly man. He held aloft a candle and peered at me.

"Is this my cousin?" he asked.

"If you are David Warren," I replied.

"I am David Warren," he said, slowly; and then he added more quickly, as if appreciating his remissness as a relative and host: "But come in, sir; come in."

As he lowered the candle and turned to close the door I was startled to see that he wore a black patch over one eye.

Whatever my first impression of the man may have been, certainly nothing occurred during the remainder of the evening to excite distrust. He carried no "side" and treated me with the greatest cordiality. Indeed, there was that about him which gave me satisfaction that he was of my own blood: his was the first low-pitched voice I had heard since I left England!

With this opinion of my relative and host, therefore, I accepted his invitation to continue his guest, and soon, with every sense of fear lulled, was shown to a chamber at the head of the stairs. I respected his sense of delicacy in not mentioning the object of my visit up to that time, and did not refer to it myself for the reason that I did not wish to have him know I had taken such precautions as to conceal the gold about my person.

How long I slept I do not know, but some time must have elapsed, when suddenly I found myself wide awake. I sat up trembling, my hearing alert for the noise that had disturbed me.

Then it came: a faint call, near and yet far distant—like the successful effort of a ventriloquist. It seemed to me that the word I had heard was *"H e l p!"*

THOROUGHLY alarmed, I thrust a hand under my pillow: The gold was still there.

I decided to reconnoitre and tip-toed downstairs to the living-room, lighting an occasional wax vesta. I had about concluded that in my nervous condition I was the victim of an hallucination, when my attention was attracted by an antique writing-desk. Something white projected from under the blotter, and quite casually I pulled it out.

It was a letter that had been in the bag snatched from me in New York! The sight of that bit of inanimate evidence—my positive knowledge that it came from the stolen Gladstone, caused my heart to flutter.

To my room I returned, but sleep was not possible, and I relieved the tedium of the wait for daylight by a thorough examination of my quarters.

At seven o'clock there was a rap at the door. An old negress signed for me to follow.

"Good morning," I heard as I entered the dining-room. "I trust you slept well, my cousin?"

The man with the black patch stood by the window, his good eye resting on me.

"Splendidly," I lied.

As we finished breakfast, however, and I made no mention of the purpose of my visit, my host appeared restless. He rose from the table.

"And now," he said, almost sharply, "I assume you have with you the amount of my legacy—one thousand pounds?"

"Sorry," I said, "but I thought it advisable to deposit the gold in a bank at Niagara Falls: the weight of the stuff made traveling tremendously uncomfortable."

He proved to be a consummate actor.

"Of course; of course," he exclaimed, with quick buoyancy. "Let's not worry about it. We can manage it later."

Twice that day I endeavored to slip away; but each time my host, with a manner disarmingly casual, contrived to join me. On the second occasion, I had reached the road and started for the village when, with profuse apologies for his carelessness, he overtook me. I continued the walk in his company.

It accomplished nothing. Again and again as we passed along the streets of the little town I noted the curious gaze of those we met, and the words of the woman scullion recurred to me. The man with me spoke to no one and no one spoke to him. Meanwhile, he kept up a running fire of comment, his thoughts seeming to race.

"By the way," he exclaimed, as we turned to retrace our steps. "I haven't shown you my laboratory."

Later, in exhibiting his workshop, he evinced extreme nervousness.

"This eye," he explained, "I lost years ago in an experiment."

At the thought of the sightless socket beneath that black patch I felt it difficult to repress a shudder.

The evening with my host did not serve to allay my fears. I had definitely planned to remain and keep awake all night; and in the morning to communicate in any event with the authorities.

During the long hours that followed I lay fully dressed on my bed, revolver in hand; but the vigil was too much for me in my exhausted condition and I finally dozed.

It must have been after two o'clock when I awoke and lay tense; a hand was being moved cautiously back and forth beneath my pillow. The search was thorough, but the gold was not there: it was again fastened about my body. And the owner of the hand seemed to conclude that some other course was necessary, for a moment later I heard him steal out.

As I slid from the bed, there came a sound as if someone had stumbled in the hallway. Instantly it was followed by a horrible shriek—again and again it pierced the air.

The hair of my head stiffened with fear.

FLINGING open the door of my room, I could just make out that a terrible struggle was in progress between two men. It continued for a brief bit, and presently I heard a long-drawn sigh; one of the combatants slid to the floor.

I waited no longer, but leaped into the passage-way, my hands extended before me. Suddenly, in the darkness, they touched those of another. *He was feeling for me!*

We crouched there an instant, each reaching for the other, as in the preliminaries of a wrestling match. His fingers were hot and slippery with moisture. Then he rushed me. The pistol was knocked from my hand, and the next instant the two of us were struggling together.

To and fro we staggered. Finally my feet tripped over the prostrate body of the man on the floor. My adversary and I went down together.

The fall loosened his grip. I was able to breath more freely, and I got a hand on his throat: the other hand wandered about his face, and clutched something.

I shrieked with the horror of it. One of my fingers was digging into the empty socket of a human eye!

Wild with the pain, my antagonist arose sheer from the floor, flinging me off as if I had been a child. An instant later I heard him running down the stairs.

It has been difficult for me since to understand my course that dreadful night. I was insensate. I followed the man with the one eye, for I felt that murder had been done. It was moonlight and I could see him plainly. With incredible swiftness, the fugitive sped over the landscape and made for a trestle which spanned a crevice half a mile in the distance.

I knew that on the opposite side of it was a heavily-wooded stretch and, fearing his escape, I endeavored to head him off. He reached the bridge a few seconds before me, however, and to my horror I saw him poise his body at one side; the next moment he went over.

I think we both screamed then; the one-eyed man as he whirled through the moonlight to his death, and I as I watched him.

Not until daybreak did I come to myself. The soles of my boots were scuffed through, and I seemed to have been running for hours; running to blot out of my vision the sight of that body spinning downward into the abyss—running to brush from the tentacles of my mem-

(Continued on page 88)

Stark Tragedy Awaited the Hero of This Story When He Investigated the Weird Philosophy of the Orient

The Soul of Peter Andrus

By HUBERT LA DUE

PETER ANDRUS is dead. His body lies at the foot of a simply-graven stone in the cemetery at Fairdale, and his soul. . .

But I am forgetting. I do not know that Peter Andrus, at the time of his death, *had* a soul. And may I, a humble country doctor, be forgiven for such heresy?

I like best to visualize Peter as a boy just entering adolescence. Dark, he was, with the features of a young Apollo, the wavy, black hair of a gypsy and the large, far-seeing eyes of a dreamer.

When I called at the Andrus home, which was often—the boy's mother was not strong—I would generally discover Peter curled up in an armchair, poring over one of the many leather-bound volumes from his late father's library. Profound books, they were, too—intricate essays on philosophy, abstract studies of the human mind, as heavy as the books themselves, hadly what one would expect a lad in knickerbockers to choose. But the father had been a deep student; at one time he had been the professor of psychology in one of the smaller universities of the state.

Or, possibly, Peter would be standing before his favorite window, looking out upon the poplar trees in the old-fashioned garden, tearing weird tunes from the strings of his violin. He played with the power of a genius and the technique of a master. Truly, a strange, baffling personality; but, withal, lovable and a young gentleman to the very tips of his slender, well-kept fingers.

I recall, also, the day, six years later, when Peter's mother was dying. I telegraphed to the boy, who was then at college, and he arrived the following morning, haggard from a sleepless night on the train.

I met him at the door. "My boy," I began, "my boy. . ." It was hard to speak to him. But he gripped my hand and did not wait for me to conclude my announcement. Somehow, he knew.

Thus it was that I assumed the role of adviser to Peter. He was twenty at the time, a tall, upstanding fellow. His years at college had hardened, slightly, the softness of his eyes, but beneath the surface he was still a dreamer.

He did not return to college. There was much to be attended to at home during the weeks that followed; and, after that, he was content to settle down quietly with his books and music.

But when Peter was twenty-three there came an inheritance from his maternal aunt in New York. It was a large sum, even for this day, and it assured him of every comfort during the remainder of his life. At first I was troubled over its possible effect on the lad. He was not accustomed to handling large sums; indeed, he had never given finance more than a passing thought. Now there was suddenly opened up to him a broad, alluring vista, that seemed to thrill the depths of his intense being.

"It seems like a dream, Uncle Joseph!" he exclaimed, upon his return from New York, where he had gone to attend to necessary legal matters. "Now I can enjoy life!" He waved his arms in a sudden ecstasy of enthusiasm. "Life! Life! To live; to learn; to be a real personality, above the drudgery that warps and destroys the soul! It makes everything possible. . . even to marrying the girl I love. It's wonderful, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is very pleasing," I returned; "but this girl you mention, Peter—may I ask who she is?" I could think of no one in Fairdale whom Peter would choose to marry. In fact, the boy had always seemed to avoid the other sex.

He searched my face eagerly for a moment, as if doubting whether he could trust me with the secret. Somehow, I felt that I was about to learn something disquieting.

Then he spoke, half audibly:

"It's Aileen, Uncle Joseph. . . Aileen Mallory!"

I was standing at the time, but I felt a sudden need of sitting down. Dropping into my easy chair, I looked at him, feeling like a father who feared for his son.

"Aileen Mallory!" I repeated, "*Aileen Mallory!*" Despite my effort to restrain my feelings, a note of dismay had crept into my voice. "Peter, my boy, I am afraid. . . I don't think. . ."

He advanced toward me, fists partly clenched; and there was strong emotion in his face—anger, fierce and blazing.

"To perdition with you and your opinion," he uttered harshly. Then he turned and left the room, slamming the door behind him.

What was I to do? Could I tell him what I knew of Aileen Mallory? Would he understand the inevitable influence of heredity? Of her mother, the pretty, but hardened little chorus girl who had entrusted the girl to me, eighteen years before, whispered into my ear the name of the father—a man who was not her husband— and then passed away? Could I tell him of how I had threatened and coaxed and shamed handsome, dissipated Harry Mallory into doing his duty toward this bit of humanity?

The marriage and birth certificates Mallory had exhibited at home were forgeries—through my connivance. But would Peter believe this? He would think the whole tale nothing but the figment of a distorted and prejudiced imagination.

The girl was shallow beyond all belief. She was pretty, as the adoration of every bachelor in Fairdale testified; but she was a butterfly, with her mother's tendencies. The law of heredity could not be denied. And she was so totally different from any type of girl I would have expected Peter to marry.

They had nothing in common. She would not have been able to understand the books and essays in which he delighted; she cared nothing for music, beyond the fox-trots and tangoes ground out by the orchestras at the dances she attended. Peter had none of the vices common to men; she smoked cigarettes and drank alarmingly at every opportunity. Beyond a worship of her own beautiful body, she had no religion. Peter, on the other hand, was deeply

religious in his way—even inclined to mysticism in his inherited craving for a better understanding of the powers of mind and soul.

Yes, indeed, it was an odd match, and, should they marry, I could see nothing ahead for them but stormy weather, and shoals on which eventually they would founder.

Of course, Peter came to me, following the scene of that afternoon, and apologized abjectly for his rudeness. I forgave the lad, healed his hurt with a reassurance of continued friendship; but I did not mention the girl again. . . I could not!

It was Peter himself who again mentioned her, several days later. He came to my office one gloomy afternoon, and slumped into a chair opposite my desk.

"She wants me to wait," he groaned. "Insists that the wedding be postponed for a year. A year! Three-hundred and sixty-five long days, while every atom of my being is crying out for her!"

He was suffering the mental agony known only to those of finer sensibilities. Still, I felt that this long period of waiting, dictated by the silly whim of a fluffy-headed girl, might be the means of saving Peter from his folly.

"I understand, my boy," I assured him, after several minutes of silence. "Such things are hard to bear; yet sometimes they turn out for the best. You have a year before you. Why not travel, Peter? Why not put in this time visiting those out-of-the-way places you have so often expressed a desire to see?"

He pondered for some little time.

"I'll think it over," he decided finally, and left in better humor than when he had come.

The following morning he came to my office again.

"I have considered the matter from all angles," he told me, "and I am going. If our love be real, it will be made even stronger by a few months separation, although it will be hard to endure."

But there was a new light in his eyes as he sat down and told me his plans. He was going to the Orient, he said, to the very cradle of civilization, and there investigate the strange things that were but hinted at in his books on psychology and philosophy.

"I want to find out for myself if some of these things be true," he said. "'I want to delve into the farthest corners of the East, and sit at the feet of the wise men."

"It is well, Peter," I replied, hardly understanding what he had been telling me, but realizing that he had been drawn out of his somber state of mind of the day before. "Go, by all means, and when you return you will be more satisfied to drift back into the quiet life of Fairdale."

WHEN Peter left Fairdale, three days later, I was at the depot to bid him farewell.

The girl. . . He had asked her to see him on his way, also, but she had demurred. The engagement had not yet been made public, she said, and she feared the gossips. There was a slight note of disappointment in Peter's voice as he told me of this, but if he thought it queer he did not say so.

More than ten weeks elapsed before I heard from him. At that time I received a letter, written in his usual nervous style, but pregnant with enthusiasm and the joy of new discoveries. It was dated at one of the smaller cities in the lower Bhutan district of India.

". . . There are things in the philosophy of this land that our own wise men have never dreamed" (he wrote). "They are too wonderful to relate in this brief letter. Nothing seems impossible to the weazened sages of this bizarre country. You and I and the others, Uncle Joseph, are as mere children.

"Do you know that but yesterday Raj Singh, one of those who have been teaching me, brought to his very feet a mongrel dog—a miserable cur that had been wandering down the village street, some distance away from where we stood. What was it that made the animal pause, turn and drag himself to the feet of the master—cowering, whimpering like a damned soul? No word had been spoken—no gesture. And the dog died a moment later.

"'You see?' said Raj Singh, turning to me, an odd expression hovering about his lips. 'He was a cur, my friend. It is easy to kill curs. They have small souls—little will-power—'

"'Possibly, then, one could kill a man in this manner—if he were a cur?' I suggested.

"'If he were a cur—yes,' Raj Singh replied. Then he added, hastily: 'But have care, my young friend. That way lies madness—perhaps death. Such power was not granted man to be trifled with.'

"So I changed the subject. But you can see for yourself that there are secrets, riddles which we of the Occident have never solved. . ."

There was much more of the same tenor, in Peter's letter. I did not understand it all, myself. I still do not understand it.

However, I was overjoyed to hear from the boy. I was pleased to learn that he was happy—that he was not passing the time in pining for the girl he had left in Fairdale.

However, he had not forgotten her, as was evidenced by the closing sentences. He felt strongly, he stated, that everything was not right at home. Would I keep an eye open for him? Just what had caused this doubt to creep into his mind I do not know: at the time I presumed that he had sensed it from something in the letters she probably had written him.

I have a membership in the Country Club, but I had never been given much to social diversion. Still, to satisfy Peter—and myself—I pulled my old dress-suit from the closet and made plans to attend a few of the functions at which Aileen might be found.

It was not long before I discovered that Peter's uneasiness was not without reason. The girl was conducting herself in a manner that was causing considerable talk, even among the faster set of Fairdale. It appeared that her name was being coupled quite too often with that of a newcomer from New York—a certain Donald Hemenway.

I secured an introduction to him at the earliest opportunity. To the layman's eye he must have been a prepossessing chap, graceful, well-poised, with the manners of a prince. But a practising physician needed but one glimpse into those eyes to decide that Hemenway was not all that he should be. We passed the usual conventional words of greeting. Then, retiring to an easy chair, I watched the young New Yorker go through the mazes of a maxixe with Peter's fiancée.

I did not like the manner in which she rested herself in his arms, nor the warmth of her glances when she gazed up into his face, nor the voluptuous movements of her body as it bent and swayed in unison with his to the strains of the music.

Nor was her surrender lost upon the young fellow himself. He accepted it, however, as though it were not unusual. I began to wonder just how well these two knew each other. They danced together many times—too many, in fact, for convention's sake: and with each succeeding dance, her cheeks became more flushed and her surrender more complete.

Other persons, too, were watching the couple: and when the two finally left the clubhouse, in Hemenway's big yellow roadster, eyebrows were lifted

and shoulders shrugged in a manner that was all too significant.

The next day I investigated Hemenway. I found that he was the scion of a prominent New York family, and in Fairdale presumably for his health. But information sent me by a colleague in the metropolis was to the effect that he was virtually in exile—that he had been ordered to the country by an irate father, following a scandal that had been the sensation of New York society.

That the young man had no intention, however, of leading the quiet and simple life was evident from the fact that he had brought with him two automobiles and a man-servant, and had leased for a term of months one of the most pretentious houses in town. There were rumors, already, of parties at his place, attended by young men and women who arrived in motors from other cities, which seldom broke up until the gray hours of dawn.

That Aileen Mallory had not yet attended any of these orgies, I felt reasonably certain. She thought too much of her position as the leading debutante of Fairdale to jeopardize it in such a manner. But she was a weakling, and, in consequence, I felt worried for her—and for Peter.

The problem was a perplexing one. If I could but talk it over with Peter, face to face, possibly I could make him understand. As it was, I had nothing definite to tell him; and an ill-advised word or two, expressed in cold writing, might cause him to leap to a wrong conclusion.

It was a day or two later that Hemenway came to my office, seeking advice.

"My nerves, Doctor Emerson," he explained. "All shot to pieces. Maybe a prescription, or something. . ."

"There is only one thing that will help your nerves, young man," I informed him, "and that is to discontinue your present mode of living. Late hours, liquor—no man can keep it up and not break down under the strain."

I studied him closely, while speaking. There were lines in his face that ought not to have appeared in the countenance of a man twice his age.

"You're like all the rest," he laughed, sulkily. "Always croaking. Wine, women and song—cut them out, and what's there to live for?"

"You'll begin to realize, some day, when it is too late," I added. "And while we're on the subject, may I offer another bit of advice?"

"Go ahead, I'm paying for it," he chuckled, harshly.

"This girl, Aileen Mallory—she's not one of your blase, city types. She's still a good girl, and, furthermore, she is engaged to marry the best friend I have in the world. I ask you, as a gentleman, to leave her alone."

For a moment, I thought he was going to strike me. Instead, he turned on his heel and started to leave the office. He stopped an instant, however, on the threshold; turned and spoke.

"And I ask you," he stated, angrily, "to mind your own business." The next moment he slammed the door, and was gone.

A little later, glancing from my window, I saw his roadster shoot down the street. Beside him sat Aileen Mallory.

THERE was a dance at the Country Club that night. With a troubled heart, I slipped into evening dress, and drove out in my old runabout.

When I arrived, the orchestra was playing some music—a weird, Oriental strain, with a seductive rhythm that wove a strange spell about the senses. There were but a few couples on the floor, and among them—Hemenway and Aileen.

I saw at a glance that the girl had been drinking. Her eyes were partly closed, and she was drifting through the intricate steps dreamily, sensuously, as though oblivious to everything about her. The Country Club had always been "dry"—even in the days before intoxicants were declared illegal. It was not difficult to guess who had given her the wine; for, when they came close, I noticed also that Hemenway's face was flushed, and that he was breathing heavily.

He gripped the girl tightly, his ungloved hand upon the soft flesh of her shoulder, and his eyes taking in hungrily the outlines of her attractively immature figure, barely concealed by the filmy and daring gown she wore.

The music ceased, and, as Hemenway caught sight of me, he led the girl off the floor, out onto the veranda. Enraged, but endeavoring to appear calm, I followed them. I found them seated in a rustic settee, in a far corner.

"Mr. Hemenway," I said, "I wish to speak to you. I am certain that Miss Mallory will excuse you for a moment."

He looked at her quickly, as if about to protest; but she acquiesced with a half-maudlin nod of her pretty head, and he arose and went with me down the steps onto the graveled driveway.

"Well?" he asked, with an air of bravado, when we were out of earshot.

"Good God, Hemenway," I uttered tersely, "have you lost your senses? If you have no respect for yourself, at least show some toward that girl. Leave her alone! Stay away from her! If you don't—"

"If I don't, what—?" he asked, his lip curling.

"I shall deem it necessary—"

He laughed.

"My dear doctor," he replied, in a tone that conveyed the mockery of an imp of hell, "my dear doctor, you forget yourself! Allow me to bid you a pleasant good evening, and return to the fair one who is waiting for me. *Au revoir!*"

He left me standing there on the driveway, staring impotently at his back as he strode up the steps. I could have killed him cheerfully, at the moment; and now, as I look backward, I think that perhaps it would have been better if I had.

I DID not sleep that night. Far into the morning I lay upon my bed, tossing restlessly, and struggling to find a solution to the problem. There were moments when I decided to go to the girl and warn her; but upon calmer reflection I realized that it would be useless. She would laugh at my warning; would tell me, probably, that I was a meddlesome busybody, over-zealous in my efforts to protect the interests of the absent Peter.

But I could tell Peter, I decided. He had a right to know. He must be brought back immediately, before it was too late. Perhaps *he* could drag the girl away from the edge of the abyss on which she was flirting.

The decision to write to Peter brought order to my chaotic thoughts. I dispatched a letter to him the following day. I did not attempt to make explanation; I merely informed him that he was needed in Fairdale, and advised him to cut short his wanderings and return at once. Peter would understand. I had no fear that he would miss the significance of the message.

I calculated that it would take thirty days, at least, for my letter to reach Peter, and still another thirty for him to make the trip back.

After posting the missive, I felt better in the consciousness of a duty performed. I tried to shake the whole unpleasant affair from my mind until his return, and devoted myself assiduously to my practice.

It was on a balmy Spring morning, three weeks after the letter had started on its way, that Aileen Mallory visited my office. I saw at a glance that she had aged years since the night I had seen her at the Country Club. There were dark circles beneath her eyes; and the eyes themselves were the eyes of one who is looking into the depths of hell. Her

features were drawn and haggard. She stood there on the threshold, gazing hesitantly at me, until finally she swayed, as though immeasurably weary. Jumping to my feet, I led her to a chair.

"Now, my dear girl," I urged, sitting down beside her, "tell me—tell me everything."

"I—I can't," she whispered, and buried her face in her hands. "I thought I could—but I can't."

"You must!" I insisted, and started to stroke the light spungold of her hair that was resting on my shoulder.

She drew suddenly away from me, and sprang to her feet. A shudder passed through her slender frame.

"Please," she begged, "don't touch me! And don't look at me that way. They all know. Everybody looks at me that way. I'm a bad girl!—a bad girl! —Oh God!—"

My telephone bell rang just at that moment, and I rose and went into the inner office to answer it. When I returned, Aileen Mallory was gone. That day she disappeared from Fairdale. It was as mysterious as it was sudden, for she left no trace.

SIX days later, Peter Andrus returned. Late in the afternoon he walked into my office, and stood silently surveying me, while I tried to frame words of welcome.

"Peter, my boy!" I exclaimed at last. "This is unexpected!"

"I had to return," he began. "Your letter—the letter—"

"*My* letter!" I echoed in amazement. There could be but one letter to which he would refer in such a manner. "Why, you couldn't have received that letter! It is less than a month since I put it in the mail!"

"Yes; you are right; I didn't receive it," he went on, in a dull monotone. "But I knew—"

I was watching him in fascination. A great change had come over him. He was bronzed, and older; his eyes were pools of living fire that seemed to burn into my very soul.

"Yes, I know," he continued. "I have learned much—these past months—I have learned much!" He sighed.

"You have heard, then, about—about Aileen?" I inquired.

"No, I have heard nothing. I came directly to your office—to talk to you, before—Well, before I did anything."

I stared at him, unable to understand. A question formed on my lips, but he spoke again before I could give it utterance.

"Tell me his name!" he demanded fiercely. "Tell me what happened to *her*—Tell me *everything!*"

He sat back and scanned my face closely with those burning eyes of his. I had thought to break the news to him by easy degrees, to withhold parts of the story until later. But now I found myself, almost against my will, detailing to him minutely every event of the past three months. My own words sounded oddly to my ears, as if my voice had become detached from the rest of my being, and were a third person beyond my control. While I was speaking he did not interrupt me, and when I had concluded, he sat, silent, for several minutes. He seemed totally lost in his thoughts, and oblivious to my presence.

Rising to his feet, he began to pace nervously from one end of the room to the other, his hands clasped behind his back. Presently he stopped before my desk, and once more turned his gaze on me. His expression was uncanny. In the depths of his eyes lurked madness, stark and wild. I shrank back in dismay.

Then he broke the silence, speaking slowly, each word distinct and vibrant as the toll of a bell. He said:

"In the sight of God, from this moment on I am a murderer!"

"Peter, not *that!*" I argued wildly. "Think——"

At that he laughed, scornfully, and, it seemed, pityingly.

"You fail to understand me," he interposed. "I did not say 'in the sight of *man*.' And now I am going out for a while, to—to make a call."

Still under his spell, I watched him put on his hat and stride from the place. A minute later I heard him crank my old runabout and start down the street. It was perhaps ten or fifteen seconds after this that my daze seemed to clear away and I found strength to rise to my feet and go out on to the veranda. Peter was not in sight.

An overwhelming fear took possession of me. Grasping the handrail for support, I tottered down the steps, and then started up the street toward Hemenway's residence.

It was several blocks distant—and I am not as young as I used to be. When I arrived at last, I found the front door ajar. My runabout was at the curb, behind Hemenway's big roadster. I climbed the stairs as rapidly as I could, and started into the living room.

I was too late. On the instant that I set foot on the threshold I saw in the semi-gloom a flash, and the crack of a pistol shot broke the silence. Then a tall form—I could not tell whose—fell headlong onto the floor, and lay silent. With palsied fingers I groped for the electric light switch beside the doorway, and turned it on.

The form on the floor was that of Donald Hemenway. He still held in his hand a small, blue-steel automatic pistol. He was quite dead, for the bullet had entered his temple.

At that moment his man-servant, who had been in the rear of the house, rushed into the room.

On the center table we found a note, in Hemenway's handwriting. The ink was not yet dry. It was *prima facie* evidence of suicide; terse but sufficient:

"I, Donald Hemenway, being unfit to live, am this day dying by my own hand, and may God have mercy on my soul."

And Peter—we found him collapsed in a large Morris chair. His eyes were open, and he seemed to be staring directly at the fallen body. There was on his face an expression of blank amazement, of surprise—the same questioning look one sometimes sees on the face of a man who has died from heart failure. He was as pale as death itself; and after I had spoken to him, and had received no answer, I feared that he *was* dead.

It seemed not, though. His pulse and respiration were normal. Still, when I shook him violently, he did not stir. He was, it would appear, in a state of coma from which he could not be awakened.

In fact, he did not awaken until nine days later. And when he did, he was not the Peter Andrus I had known. The light had faded from his eyes; his body, though perfect, as our medical tests showed, was a mere pulsating shell of flesh, blood and bone. He—perhaps I should not say "he"—was without mind, without memory, without will-power even to raise a hand; a living temple of God, from which the spirit seemed to have flown.

He lived, thus, until one day his body was found, stiff and cold, in bed. His powerful heart, minus the stimulus of spirit, had ceased its mechanical pulsating.

Just what transpired in Hemenway's living room that afternoon, before I arrived, I can only guess. Of course, there still remains the note—in Hemenway's own handwriting. Yet there is a strange fear in my mind; I cannot cast off the doubt that pervades it.

Was Peter Andrus correct when he proclaimed himself a murderer "in the sight of God?" Or did he die at peace with his Maker, and did his soul—

But there again, I have forgotten. I am an old man, strong in the faith, and may I be forgiven for such heresy; but I do not know that Peter Andrus, at the time of his death, *had* a soul.

Here's a Story Based on a Subject of Wide Human Appeal and Containing a Horrifying Climax

The Case of Dr. Johnstone

By BURTON PETER THOM

I HAVE just read of the death of Robert Belmore Johnstone.

With one or two exceptions, all of the metropolitan dailies printed accounts of his life and work. Many of the medical journals will also doubtless contain editorial obituaries as they appear within the next few weeks.

For, as is well known, Dr. Johnstone was one of the foremost physicians in the English speaking world before he was overtaken by the horrible misfortune at the height of his career. That he was great in the science of medicine, one of the greatest of researchers and investigators, the peer of Magendie, Bernard, or Virchow is true. That he was a noble man, as we understand that word to mean a high and gracious soul, is also true. I, who knew him better perhaps than anyone else can testify to that.

But that he suddenly became insane six years ago and that he died a few days ago is not true. Dr. Johnstone was the sanest man I ever knew, and when he was declared insane *he was already dead.*

To the reader and to those who knew him this statement is both a paradox and a mystery. Yet nevertheless it is true. The solution to this paradox and mystery I alone know. The time has now come, I believe, when it should be told. The facts as they occurred I shall set down here in the form of a story because I believe they will find more credence than if they were embodied in a monograph and read before a medical society or a society for psychical research.

It is difficult to begin, however, because I have no experience in writing fiction, which is the mode whereby this narrative is told. Also, for that reason, I am obliged to divest the telling of all scientific terms which appeals to me very much like writing about some disease in the form of a novel.

THE fame of the physician is not wide; nor does it last. Who remembers the famous physicians of a hundred years ago—Laennec, Cooper, Abernethy, Rush? Except to their professional brethren, and not all of them, they have been long forgotten.

So it is with Johnstone. Thousands remember him now because of personal contact; but many thousands never heard of him, and fifty years hence his name and his achievements in solving some of the abstruse problems of pathology, his researches in physiology, will, except to the learned few, mean almost less than nothing.

Yet, during the years of his activity, he did much work that will last. But of his greatest victory that ended in—no, I will not say defeat, for defeat means failure and he did not fail—I will tell so that if in the future, that which he proved, is proved again, the credit of it—the glory of it—will go to him.

It was while I was an interne at the Neurological Hospital that I became acquainted with Dr. Johnstone. He was chief of the visiting staff and he had a room fitted up as a laboratory where he did his experimental and research work. Because of his position at the hospital the internes were told off from time to time to assist him. Since my tendencies were, and still are I may say, all directed toward the experimental and research side of medicine rather than the practical or clinical side, I perhaps showed more enthusiasm than the other interne assistants and this common bond of interest soon made us very good friends.

When my interneship at the hospital expired and I started out to practice for myself I continued to act as his assistant. It was through his influence that a year later I gave up private practice altogether and devoted myself exclusively to research, when I was appointed a research fellow in pathology at the Stoneman Institute, a whole time appointment which I still hold.

My duties there made it impossible for me to work with him as I had formerly, but while I was now doing research independently, I never failed to take the opportunity to work with my teacher (for so I regarded him) whenever the chance came. His vast knowledge and keen insight into the vagaries of disease and the wealth of suggestions that he was always ready to give freely, made association with him of immense value to me in my own investigations. You can therefore readily understand my regard for him, not only as a scientist but as a man.

Unlike many men of high scientific attainments, whose lives are spent in the pursuit of knowledge, Dr. Johnstone was not a pedant. Nor was he a stark materialist as many of his calling often are. It seemed to me that his mind was so fine and subtle, so penetrative that he could see with the eyes of the spirit things which were denied to those who boasted of their materialism. For I have often noted that those who are steeped in science to the exclusion of all else not infrequently miss the true cause of things.

It could be truly said that Dr. Johnstone was the most eminent physiologist of his time; for none had delved more deeply into the mechanism of life; yet, unlike some that I can name, he did not believe that the life of an individual—man or beast—was simply the sum of his endocrine reactions. To him life was infinitely more than a chemical reaction. He believed that every living creature had a soul, a spirit, a *pneuma* as the old Greeks called it, that motivated its physical structure and was as much a part of it as the tissue planes of which its body was composed.

I am aware, and doubtless Dr. Johnstone was also aware, that the Theosophists and other more ancient cults hold to this belief, but I do not wish to infer that Dr. Johnstone was a mystic or given over to occultism as many who believe as he did are very prone to be. He saw it only through the cold light of reason. For when reason illuminates the spirit as well as the intellect it shows many things which others cannot see.

Researchers in medicine rarely discuss these things. Some deny with vehemence that the soul exists; to others—and they are the majority—it is a matter of indifference. But Johnstone was not of this number. The subject inter-

ested him. I am quite confident that it had interested him for many years. Personally, I must confess, the existence or non-existence of the soul in man never appealed to me as a subject for scientific discussion or research.

As to animals having souls; it never entered my mind. I recall our first conversation on the subject—these words especially:

"Those who do not believe the soul exists are not in a position to explain the phenomena of life. *'Je pense donc Je suis'*—'I think, therefore I am.' The Frenchman was right. I am what I am, no matter in what corporate or incorporate existence my ego may be. The spirit is as indestructible as energy."

It was shortly after this that I believe he began his strange experiments; although he did not take me into his confidence in these. I cannot, therefore, state anything as to their nature, although I am quite sure that they were not along the lines usually taken by psychic researchers. From my knowledge of his way of thinking, I am confident that his approach was from the physiologic or biologic point of view.

It was about the middle of June, or thereabouts, in 1916 that he called me on the telephone and asked me to spend the week-end at his country home on the North Shore.

"I want you to help me in an experiment that will open your eyes," was the reason he gave for the invitation.

It is needless to state that I accepted with alacrity. I was "fed up" with work, and a three days rest at his delightful home on the Sound was very appealing to me. As those who knew him are aware, Dr. Johnstone had no office in the city. His private practice was entirely as a consultant, and such cases as were referred to him by other physicians he saw in a room set aside for that purpose at the hospital. Not infrequently he was called in consultation out of the city. From June to October he spent his week-ends at his country home.

I found him waiting for me at the station, and as we went spinning along the pleasant country road in his high-powered roadster, which he had just purchased, our conversation was on the merits of his new car rather than on physiologic experiments. It was not until after an excellent dinner and we had lit our pipes on the porch that he told me of the nature of the experiment he intended to perform.

"As you perhaps know," he began, "I have been engaged for some time in research to prove the existence of the soul or personal identity. You are the only one who is acquainted with my efforts in that direction. It is needless for me to say, as you very well know, that if I had made my experiments public, my scientific friends, with hardly an exception, would have made of me a laughing stock.

"For that reason, except to you, who I know do not doubt my sanity, I have kept my work a secret. Hitherto, as in all research having to do with life and its functions, in health or disease, I have experimented with animals. I have now reached that stage where a human subject is necessary. I therefore propose to experiment on myself, or, rather, it is necessary for myself to form part of the experiment. That is why I have sent for you. Not only that you, who in a sense I look upon as my pupil, may witness the physical demonstration of the existence of the ego outside of its original habitat, but also because I will require your assistance in what I propose to prove. It will mean that you will also participate in the fame which the proof will bring."

The technicalities of his proposed experiment he did not reveal; and as he did not seem to care to discuss them I turned the subject. The fact of the matter was that neither of us cared to talk "shop," and as the coming experiment was certainly included in that category we talked of other things.

I have often thought of that evening since. How little did either of us realize what was going to happen.

"Sleep as late as you please," were the parting words of my host before we went to bed.

If I were writing fiction it would now be in order, I suppose, to digress and tell how I was filled with vague fears of the morrow; how strange, weird noises or other happenings were heard or seen in the watches of the night, that would help to build the structure of the culminating horror. But nothing like that occurred.

There was no reason for it. A wonderful, far-reaching, perhaps out of the ordinary, scientific experiment was to be performed. Such are being done every day. To the scientist they are no more than a part of the day's work. The scientific demonstration of the soul or personal identity by means of a carefully reasoned and rationally worked out experiment, while fraught with intense interest, need not necessarily be uncanny. The investigations of Lodge, of Crookes, of Rochas, and—most recent of all—Richet, when subjected to scientific analysis are not ghostly or uncanny.

Science has no place for phenomena that reason cannot fathom. Such do not exist except in the imagination of those who feel, but do not think. But I have often thought of why Dr. Johnstone's great experiment had the outcome that it did. I can hardly bring myself to believe that the most important part of all should have been overlooked or provided against. For I never knew whether this was an oversight or just plain accident.

Perhaps they are right who say that there are some things which we cannot or rather, ought not to know, and that there is some Power, call it what you will, that says, "So far shalt thou go and no farther."

I do not know. In a way, the experiment failed; failed horribly; yet, Dr. Johnstone proved that the soul exists, that there is spirit as well as matter, proved it in a way that I, at least, could not possibly deny. Therefore, instead of saying that he failed, I shall say that he perished, for a man may perish and yet not fail.

I was awakened in the morning by the birds chirping in the trees. After breakfast, which, I remember, was a very cheerful meal, we went out on the porch and had a smoke.

"I think we had better go upstairs now," said Johnstone, when we had finished our pipes. "I want to be through by twelve, so that I can beat you on the links this afternoon."

"We'll see about that," I replied, laughing.

The laboratory was on the top floor and ran the whole length of the house. I had never been in it before, but I could see at a glance that it was very completely equipped. In the center of the room were two glass operating tables, and on one of them, covered by a sheet was what appeared to be a human form, either of a child or a rather short man or woman. The rhythmic rise and fall of the sheet showed that it was alive.

I raised the sheet and saw a full grown orang asleep, evidently under the influence of some narcotic.

"He's one part of the experiment," said Johnstone smiling, "and I'm the other."

I did not reply, and I did not return the smile. For some reason, I do not know why, I experienced a feeling of revulsion. To experiment with animals is to me very commonplace; so too, within certain limits, are experiments on human beings. I am not squeamish and I am not sentimental, but this—

"Do you intend to transfer your intelligence into the body of this ape and have his—whatever it is—pass into yours?" I asked.

"That is just what I intend to do," he replied. "If I can do that by physical means I will have proved not only that

the soul exists, but that it exists also as a tangible entity."

I said no more; for, after all, why should I? The experiment was eminently proper. The phenomena of telepathy, apparitions of the living and dead, messages from discarnate intelligences are being constantly investigated; why should not a scientist of the first class investigate this profound and vital problem, the enigma of enigmas, from the standpoint of those sciences which have most to do with the manifestations of life and death—biology and physiology?

An investigation carried to a successful issue along these lines would do more to convince the skeptical than any amount of the so called "evidence" offered by spiritualistic investigators.

We proceeded at once with the work in hand. At Dr. Johnstone's direction, I shaved the nape of the animal's neck and also a tonsure-shaped area on the top of the head. I then adjusted a cap-shaped electrode that was held in place by tapes tied firmly under the chin. It was not necessary to shave the man, as he was sufficiently bald to allow a similar electrode to be fitted without the hair interfering with the contact.

He then had me fasten his legs and arms with leather straps attached to the table on which he lay; the beast was not restrained. I then connected the two electrodes by means of a non-insulated wire of some metallic substance having a peculiar luminous lustre—radio active I would say—and very cold to the touch.

I also attached to the posts of the battery two longer wires of the same material, one each from the two electrodes, thus completing the circuit. The battery, if I may call it such, for I do not know whether it generated electricity or some other force, I cannot describe, because the units of which it was composed were encased in a wooden box. It was placed on a small stand between the two glass-topped tables on which the man and beast reclined.

"All set!" I exclaimed.

"Turn on the switch."

I did so. There was a slight crackling noise, not unlike that made by a D'Arsonval current, and instantly both bodies became rigid. The respiratory movements ceased, as well as the apex beat of the heart. The eyes remained open and stony and staring, with the pupils widely dilated. On the face of the man and on that of the beast there seemed to come the change of death. Their features became pinched and sank in, the lips livid and drawn tight over the teeth. Theirs was the *facies Hippocratica,* the sure harbinger of death, described by the great father of medicine long ago.

It was as if the vital organs—the heart and lungs—no longer functioned and the glow of life was gone. This phase lasted exactly one minute and twenty-two seconds, for I timed it with my watch. Then the heart of each began to beat again: slowly and feebly at first, but the force and number of the beats increased with each passing second.

They began to breathe. They lived; although unconscious. For awhile they seemed to sleep; to sleep with that profoundness that is observed only in children or the aged, or in those who are utterly exhausted by physical exertion. This second phase lasted for a few seconds less than five minutes.

Then came another change. A change that was subtle and terrible to see. It was as if life was coming back, but in each it was a different life and this difference was indelibly stamped upon their features. The countenance of the ape shone with a light that was new and strange; the countenance of the man was transformed by a look that was not human. I was awed; for what I saw was stranger far than anything I had ever beheld.

The ape turned his eyes toward me. The cavernous mouth opened, the black snout grimaced, in husky, guttural tones came the words, "Where am I?"

I did not answer; I simply stared at him. The beast sat up and stretched his arms, and then clambered to the floor and shambled toward me. I stepped back—I could not help it.

"Don't be afraid. It's only I—Johnstone." The wrinkled face broke into a hideous smile. "Help me to unloose the other."

The man by this time was tugging at the straps in an endeavor to get free. As I unbuckled the strap that held his shoulders down, he tried to bite me.

"Stop that!" croaked the ape, and he struck the man a sharp blow in the face. He cowered from the blow and made an angry grimace, and when the leg straps were unloosed sprang to the floor with a wild yell and began capering about the room with body bent and hanging arms —like an ape. If it were not horrible, it would have seemed grotesque, but as it was it sickened me.

The beast clutched me by the arm, and in a voice that trembled with emotion, hoarse and raucous though it was, said, "See! his soul is in my body and my soul is in his body. I have proved that the soul exists—that there is an ego in all living things."

IN SILENCE we stood and watched the bestial thing, and it came home to me how much the body reflects the soul within. Round and round the room it ran; peering, muttering, fingering, smelling. Suddenly it approached and stopped at the table where the battery stood.

With a cry of alarm, the one at my side leaped forward to drive it away. But it was too late. As the beast leaped, the man swept the apparatus to the floor. It fell with a crash. From the broken jars a fuming, greenish vapor arose that filled the room with a pungent, acrid odor. The wires gave off faint, red lights and turned to white, ashlike streaks.

The ape gripped him. The man yelled and bit and struggled. The body of Johnstone was that of a powerful man in the prime of life and he put up a fierce fight. Over and over they rolled, upsetting chairs and tables, now the man, now the beast, on top. Slowly but surely, the animal strength overcame that of the human. The man was down and the beast was on top.

In vain the man's fists beat the broad, black face and tore at the hairy chest. The short, thick fingers clutched his throat tighter and tighter, his face turned blue and his tongue stuck out to a sickening length, and his eyes seemed as if they were bursting from their sockets.

I watched the fearful struggle without attempting to interfere, because it was impossible to do so. It was not like a fight between man and man but a fight between two beasts. I was fascinated by it, but when I realized that the man was dying—that the beast was choking him to death, I came to myself.

"Stop it! for God's sake stop it!" I cried, "You're killing him—you're killing *yourself!*" and I grasped the ape by the shoulder and tried to pull him off.

"Let go of him!" He understood and relaxed his hold and stood up. The man still breathed feebly.

"What is the matter with you?" I asked with heat. "If you kill him, how can you return to your own body?"

The ape turned and looked at me.

"Yes," he groaned, "I know; but he has broken the bridge over which we must pass to enter into our own."

"What!" I cried. "Do you mean to tell me that you can't go back? Can't the apparatus be repaired? We can keep this," and I pointed to the prostrate form on the floor, "locked up until I can get what you need."

(Continued on page 90)

THE DEAD-NAMING OF LUKAPEHU

By P. D. GOG

THE following tale was handed to me in manuscript by an acquaintance to whom it was related by a friend who heard it from an old resident of the Hawaiian group as happening to his father. In view of the father's integrity, and bearing in mind other similar cases, there is, of course, no doubt as to the truth of the story. Whether Lukapehu died of an "error of mortal judgment," of the incantations of the old medicine man, or of superstitious fear, is for the reader to judge for himself.

The title Kahuna means sorcerer. Kahuna-anana is a specific title for a death-dealing sorcerer, from Kahuna a sorcerer; and anana, to gaze intently. The epithet suggests that ancient belief in the evil eye, so naively preserved in the Scottish ballads, and particularly common in Italy and India. The story is recorded here substantially as it came into my possession.

In 1859, my father had already established himself on a large plantation on Kawai, one of the Hawaiian group. He acquired among his "boys" a reputation for utter fearlessness and, to an astonishing degree, for foolhardy disregard of the various powers of enchantment. There dwelt also on Kawai, where the two branches of the Waimea River join, a famous old Kahuna, Kapukapu, who far surpassed his fellow sorcerers in skill, being reputed a Kahuna-anana or death-dealing sorcerer. So great was the reputation of this magician that never did any of the villagers presume to oppose his wishes; but often they complained bitterly to my father of Kapukapu's unjust demands for food and service, exacted under threats of fearful and certain calamity. My father pooh-poohed these tales, particularly to a certain one of his boys, Lukapehu, his most skillful fisherman, exhorting him to have no fear of the old man but to face him boldly and laugh his threats to scorn.

ONE evening in the year I have mentioned, Lukapehu came up the valley as the sun was setting, carrying in his net the day's catch, which had been large even for him. He was a tall, good-natured native, swinging along with the care-free abandon of superfluous physical strength and primitive irresponsibility. Perhaps his savage heart was touched by the glory of the sunset, which was reflected from the palms and tropic ferns in a golden aura; perhaps he was thinking of the wife and the naked little bambino who would greet him at his hut and rejoice with him in the silver treasure his skill had wrested from the sea; for as he strode up the deep valley of the Waimea River, he sang a plaintive melody that mingled with the twilight like the lengthening shadows, faint, elusive.

Suddenly the song ceased and an uncanny silence pervaded the ravine, save for the swish of the river and the twitter of restless birds in the koa trees. Lukapehu had reached the branching tributaries where Kapukapu dwelt. Silhouetted against the fiery sun, stood the old sorcerer, tall, gaunt, leaning upon his staff and gazing intently down the valley. Clothed only in a ragged loin cloth, his long, unkempt hair brushing his shoulders, his thin, gray beard stirring in the evening breeze, his eyes bulging like fire brands from his cadaverous skull, he looked like the animated skeleton of a fiend. When he saw the fisherman with his burden, he crossed the stream and stopped Lukapehu.

"My son," he said, "I see how great has been your success. When a young man has so much it is well for him to share with an old man."

Lukapehu, fortified by my father's example, replied boldly, "It is well also, sometimes, for an old man to mind his own business."

BRUSHING past the gaunt Kapukapu, he continued up the valley, ignoring the calling of his name by the enraged sorcerer. But presently he heard the Kahuna chanting over strange, sonorous syllables which gathered intensity and resonance as the voice went on, until from the low, menacing hum of vowels, the Kahuna had raised the echoes of the valley and the wood with his reverberant chant, "Lukapehu shall die! Lukapehu shall die!"

Lukapehu's heart sank. He tried to reassure himself with the recollection of my father's words, but primitive fear was fast laying hold on his soul. How could civilization free from bondage in a single generation, a life which was the product of ages of superstitious slavery? Had not the evil Kahuna-anana called the fatal curse down upon his cousin, and had he not perished miserably? How could he, Lukapehu, hope to escape?

He looked back. . . . and was lost! The sun had gone down leaving a bloody reflection in a cloud-bespattered sky; the shadows lay black and threatening among the palms. Beside the darkly mumbling stream stood Kapukapu, his ragged hair fluttering in the quickening breeze, his long arms extended, his gnarled staff pointing toward the terrified Lukapehu, while he muttered his diabolical dead-naming, "Lukapehu shall die! Lukapehu shall die!"

Lukapehu broke into a run, leaving a silver trail behind him as the fishes fell from his net. Faster and faster he sped toward the shelter of his hut, as the chant of the Kahuna-anana rose higher and higher until it seemed to fill the earth, "Lukapehu shall die! Lukapehu shall die!"

The poor fisherman sank exhausted before the door of his hut saying over and over, "I am dying; Kapukapu has called me! I am dying! I am dying!"

His frightened wahine and the little brown bambino dragged him into the house and sent for my father. But he was busy and sent word back that Lukapehu should not fear, he could not die, and that he, my father, would come down in the morning.

The next morning, just before dawn, while the dew was still heavy on the ferns and the pandanus, he rode over to the hut of the fisherman expecting to find him about his work. But Lukapehu still lay moaning on the cot, nor could my father raise him up.

He died with the breaking of the day, just as the sun dispelled the gloom of the Waimea valley, called to his death by the hideous Kahuna-anana.

The Ghastly Secret of Bludmanton Castle Is Revealed in a Harrowing Way in

The Cup of Blood

A Condensed Novel

By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

IT WAS after the close of the World War that Anderson and I decided to tour Scotland afoot.

As my purpose is not to chronicle the details of that trip in toto, but rather to relate the story of how it was brought to a most abrupt and fearful termination, I will state, as briefly as possible, the incidents which led to that fateful and eventful night at Bludmanton Castle.

After two weeks of pleasant tramping and camping, with every night spent under canvas, we were strolling through a quaint little village late one afternoon, hot, tired and thirsty, when Anderson's roving eye spotted a sign that gave promise of sundry and assorted liquid refreshments of a most inviting nature. Straight for that sign we sped at double quick, eased our packs to the floor of the cool taproom, and were soon washing the dust from our parched throats.

My buddy is quick at scraping acquaintances, and it was not long before he had started a conversation with old Sandy Magruder who sat at the table next to ours. He was not loath to join us in a mug or two of ale, at Anderson's invitation, and we found him exceedingly interesting.

I presume there is scarce a village, town or hamlet anywhere in the world that has not some individual landmark or curiosity which its inhabitants will point out with pride to strangers. In San Antonio they ask "Have you seen the Alamo?" in New Orleans, "Have you been through the French Market?" In Rome, "Have you visited the Catacombs?" And so it goes.

In this case it was a haunted castle. Bludmanton Castle, so Sandy assured us, was haunted by "Gibberin' ghaists and shriekin' houlets, and mayhap the Auld Nick himsel'."

I was disposed to argue the possibility of there being any such creatures as gibbering ghosts, but Anderson kicked my shins sharply under the table and plied the old fellow with questions that brought out a remarkable legend concerning the ancient ruins.

It seems that, many years before, Bludmanton Castle had been the stronghold of Sir Malcolm Blud, Laird of Bludmanton, a cruel and inhuman monster who was despised and hated the countryside over, both for his servile cringing to those above him and his heartless and tyrannical treatment of those about him who had the misfortune to be of humble birth.

Though they hated and reviled their heartless laird, the people of Bludmanton loved and respected his wife, the beautiful and gentle Lady Helen, for many were her acts of kindness to the poor and afflicted, and did she but hear of someone who had suffered through the tyranny of her husband, she would straightaway make amends insofar as her slender purse would permit.

Lady Helen was the daughter of a northern laird, and at the time of her marriage, brought two of her old servants to live at Bludmanton Castle. These servants gossiped, as servants will, and it was not long until everyone in and about the castle was acquainted with the circumstances of her unhappy wedding.

It was said that this marriage to a man more than twice her age had not been of her own choosing, for she was only eighteen at the time and Sir Malcolm well past fifty, but was forced on her by her father when it had been offered him as the only alternative to foreclosure for a certain debt he owed the Laird of Bludmanton, and could not pay on account of reduced circumstances.

A loveless marriage is, at best, a tragic thing, but when there is added to it the despair of a hopeless lost love, then it is indeed a calamity. It seems that this was the case with Lady Helen, for there were whispers of a young theological student who had won her affection some time before the wedding, and on whose account she had been sternly rebuked by her father. Not that she ever showed it, either by word or action, for she was a true and faithful wife; ever submissive to the word of her laird and keen to please him in all things. Despite the secret sorrow that clutched at her heart she went about silently and uncomplainingly, gradually growing paler and more frail, until at the end of a year she was but a shadow of her former self.

It was about this time that the aged minister of the parish died, and a younger man who had but recently taken orders was sent to fill his place. As the Lady Helen was continually engaged in her ministrations to the suffering and needy it was natural that she should often meet the young minister in the homes of his parishioners, and while she did her best to alleviate their physical wants he supplied them with spiritual comfort.

It was but natural, too, that when through illness, she grew unable to leave the castle on her errands of mercy, she should request the young minister to act as her agent in distributing charity. In this capacity he became a frequent caller at the castle, and as the laird was much away, the busy tongues of malicious gossip were soon wagging with hints of a clandestine romance which at length reached the ears of the master.

Sir Malcolm flatly refused to believe these idle rumors at first; that is, until he learned that the young minister was one and the same with the theological student who had won her girlish love. This changed his views, and transformed him from a trusting though stern husband, to a crafty, unscrupulous fiend.

Thereafter, he spied continually on the doings of his wife, at the same time taking great care in order that she might not suspect she was being watched. But her conduct was above reproach at all times, and had it not been for a single unfortunate incident it is probable that he would have given over his spying, and perhaps taken no small amount of vengeance on her slanderers. But as luck would have it, she was taken with a giddiness one day when the young minister was present and would have fallen to the floor in a faint had he not caught her.

The maidservant, who was in the room at the time, was sent for restoratives, and it was during her absence that the suspicious laird appeared in the doorway. At sight of his young wife in the arms of his supposed rival, who did not note his presence, as his back was toward the door, he turned and strode to his room with clenched hands, and a look on his face that struck terror in the hearts of those servants who chanced to meet him.

He kept to his room all that night, and and the next day sent the Lady Helen to visit her father, saying that he was going to repair and remodel the castle. When she had started on her journey to the north he rode away alone to be absent for more than a month. He returned with a gang of foreign workmen, and ordered everyone from the castle while the remodeling was in progress, so it was done with absolute secrecy.

When the work was finished he personally conducted the foreigners to Edinburgh and put them aboard ship with their passages paid back to their own land.

On his return, he sent for the Lady Helen and gave a great feast in honor of the reopening of the castle. Guests were bidden from far and near, and for the first time in many years, the tenants were given the freedom of the place. Sir Malcolm, his wife, and the young minister were all present at the banquet in the early part of the evening, nor was their later absence noted until nearly twelve o'clock, at which time the laird put in an appearance, looking pale and haggard.

The Lady Helen and the minister were seen no more that night, nor were they ever seen afterward.

GOSSIP had it that the two had eloped, but there were whispered rumors among the servants that the jealous husband had made away with them in some secret recess of the castle. There was a lackey who swore that, on passing the master's room at eleven o'clock on the night of the banquet, he heard the scream of a woman in mortal terror. The maid who put the room in order the next day told of finding a great crimson bloodstain on the rug, and under one of the chairs, a silver goblet on which blood had dried and caked.

That the laird had taken some terrible revenge on them seemed proved beyond any shadow of doubt, though there were none who dared denounce him openly, or even to question him in the matter.

On the noon following the night of the banquet the laird had a stroke that sent him into a wild delirium. The old doctor who attended him said he had not long to live, and his nephew and heir, Sir Eric Blud, was summoned. As Sir Eric was in Aberdeen at the time, three days elapsed before his arrival.

Of all the servants in the household, there was but one with the courage to sit up with the raving master at night. Old Steenie MacDonald had been long in the service of the Lairds of Bludmanton, and he vowed that even the Old Nick himself should not turn him from his duty.

What Steenie saw or heard in that accursed bed-chamber, no man ever knew, but it was said that he came running from the room about eleven o'clock that night, struck dumb with horror, nor did he ever speak after that.

Servants who had occasion to pass through the hallway went by that door as fast as their legs would carry them, and told of hearing the sobbing and moaning of a woman, mingled with the cursing and raving of the laird, although everyone knew he was alone in that great room.

When Sir Eric arrived he went straight to the master's room, without heed to the tales concerning it, saying he feared neither man nor devil, and that if a sick man could withstand the power within that room, an able-bodied man with sword and pistols should have nothing to worry over. It was near the hour of eleven when he stepped to the bedside, while a group of curious, fearful servants cowered just outside the door.

Upon his arrival, the laird ceased his cursing and raving and greeted him with a feeble handshake. Though he was

gasping for breath, he managed to make himself audible, even to those who stood without the door.

"You come in the nick of time, nephew," he said, "for I have not overmuch of the breath of life left in me, and there are a few things I must tell you. My entire estate, personal and real—land, moneys, everything—goes to you at my death. I have but one request to make of you, and that is regarding the disposition of my body. In the great storeroom at the end of the keep is a strong-box which you will open, and in which you will find a leaden casket. Seal my remains in this casket and place it, without service or ceremony, in the tomb which I have caused to be built beside the chapel tower."

Scarcely had he spoken these words when the chapel bell began solemnly to toll the hour of eleven, and the piercing shriek of a woman in dreadful anguish rent the air. At this instant the old laird fell back dead and the young laird gripped his pistols and backed toward the door, for the cry had come from inside the room and it was plain to be seen there was no woman present.

There followed the muffled sounds of sobbing and moaning, and loud knocks and raps were heard on the ceiling, the walls, and the floor. The servants beat a hasty retreat, and Sir Eric was not slow to follow.

The next day he carried out the orders of the deceased, and, in doing so, met with a strange and unexpected adventure, for just as they were lowering the leaden casket into the tomb the lid fell shut with a loud *bang* and the frightened pall bearers let go their straps which were hooked to rings in the coffin.

The young laird ordered them to open the tomb and recover the straps, but when they raised the lid, both casket and straps had completely disappeared. They concluded it was the work of the devil himself, for the interior was of solid masonry without crack of a size to admit even a sword-point, and neither laird nor retainers would have more to do with Bludmanton Castle.

They left in a body that day, every living soul, and found temporary shelter in the homes of the tenants until the young laird completed his new stronghold, which he built nearer the village.

WE WERE on our fifth mug of ale when Sandy finished his story.

"And you say the castle has not been inhabited since?" asked Anderson.

"The place hasna housed ilka human being to this day," replied Sandy, "but mony's the tale of hunters and wayfarers wha, passing the castle at nicht, ha' heard fearsome sounds an' blood-curdling shrieks fit to raise the dead."

"I have a consuming curiosity to see that old ruin," said Anderson.

"Let's go out and look it over," I suggested.

Anderson set down his mug with a crash.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "We'll go out there and camp for the night! It will be a rare adventure. Think of the sport of camping next to a ruined castle full of spooks! Maybe we can catch sight of one, or perhaps hear it wail."

"My cart is outside," said Sandy, warmed by the ale he had consumed. "I'll take ye ower an' ye maun view the ruins before sundown, but heed the advice of auld Sandy Magruder an' pitch your tent elsewhere. For me, I wadna spend the nicht in the lee o' Bludmanton Castle for a' the siller in the banks of Edinburgh."

We shouldered our packs and followed the old fellow outside to where a lean, rangy, mangy horse stood, hitched to a dilapidated jaunting-cart. The vehicle creaked alarmingly as we clambered aboard, and away we went, rumbling and rattling along the dusty road.

We followed the road for perhaps four miles, then turned into a narrow lane which led through a dense, shady wood. As we bumped round a bend in the narrow lane an imposing structure came into view—imposing despite its crumbling towers and skeleton turrets, its broken machicolations, and its age-shattered merlons and crenels. It was built partly on a sloping hillside and partly on the level floor of the valley, and our winding road took us directly past the postern gate, against which a rotting ladder stood, to a spot on the hillside directly opposite the drawbridge, whence bubbled a spring of clear, sparkling water.

"A weel," said Sandy, leaping from the cart with remarkable agility for his years, "as your General Pershing said at the tomb of LaFayette, 'We are here'."

"An ideal camping spot," exclaimed Anderson, and simultaneously we leaped to the ground, asking Sandy to show us about the castle and point out the different places he had mentioned in his story, but he flatly refused.

"I wouldna venture in that ill-faur'd, ghaistly place for a' the grund i' the parish, an' if six purpose be in your minds, I rede you beware, for though ye maun ha' been braw sodgers an' fought the enemy to a standstill, bear in mind that man has enemies that canna be overcome wi' bullets an' bayonets."

"If you refer to His Satanic Majesty and his imps," said Anderson, smiling, "I, for one, am quite willing to take a chance, having fought with the Devil Dogs and alongside the Ladies From Hell."

"Yes, let Beelzebub come," I said, "and bring a few of his foul fiends with him. As for ghosts, I am curious to hear one shriek. Certainly there could be nothing more interesting than a creature without lungs or vocal chords that can shriek."

Sandy turned away sorrowfully. "Puir misguided lads, ye ken not that of which ye speak so lightly. I ha' nae doot ye'll be made to pay heavily for every word, and as I see you are na disposed to return wi' me, I must be gangin, for the nicht will soon fall."

Upon his firm refusal to accept any pay for his services we thanked him heartily and bade him a cheery good-by as he rumbled off down the winding lane.

I began to unroll the tent, but Anderson stayed my hand.

"Wait, Art," he said, "I have an idea."

I looked up inquiringly.

"There is no need of our putting up the tent tonight," he went on.

"So that's your idea, is it? You'll stretch your hat-band all out of shape with one of those ideas of yours, yet. For my part, I'm going to sleep under canvas. I smell rain in the air and—"

Anderson looked slightly aggrieved.

"If you'll have the goodness to hear me out and not jump so all-fired hastily at conclusions, perhaps you will change your mind. Who said anything about sleeping in the open? I was about to suggest that we sleep under a roof."

"You mean in the castle?" There was a note of something— let us call it anxiety—in my voice, that betrayed an inner repugnance at the idea of which I had not been objectively aware.

"Of course, if you're afraid—"

"Who's afraid? You big stiff, I think you're scared yourself."

He laughed. "Here we are, daring each other like a couple of schoolboys. I know perfectly well there is nothing to fear in that old castle, and so do you. It may save us a good wetting. Have you noticed that heavy bank of clouds on the northern horizon? There's a big storm coming and we're sure to get soaked out here on the hillside, tent or no tent."

"Well, anyway, let's cook our bacon and eggs before we go in," I said. "I'm so hungry my stomach thinks I went off and left it."

"Oh, come on. We can do our cooking inside. There'll be plenty of fire-

places, and I don't think we will have any trouble finding fuel."

We picked up our bundles and, with Anderson in the lead, walked gingerly over the shaky, sagging drawbridge. The deep moat was nearly empty of water, as the lower embankment had given way, but a tiny stream trickled far below us, fed by the hillside spring. We passed through the bailey and thence to the inner court, where the *click* of our boots on the worn flagstones rang weirdly back from the surrounding walls. My companion looked about him with the air of one to whom the exploring of feudal castles was an everyday experience and made for a tall, arched doorway at our right.

"The family quarters of the laird should be in this part of the building," he said.

Dogged by the hollow echoes of the empty building, we crossed a corridor, passed through a huge room, evidently a banquet hall, entered a second corridor, and passed many doorways, into each of which Anderson peered. At length he entered one, larger and more pretentious than the rest, and I followed.

"I believe this is the master's bedroom," he said, easing his pack to the floor. "Faugh! How musty it smells, and there's dust and dirt everywhere. Let's spread the tent on the floor in front of the fireplace. That will give us a clean place to eat and sleep, at least."

There was a small quantity of partly burned fuel in the fireplace which we scraped together, and soon had a fire crackling. Then it was agreed that I should prepare our evening meal while Anderson went out and scouted for more wood.

When I had the coffee perking and the bacon simmering, I walked about examining the room in the flickering firelight, for the murky twilight was already merging into darkness, and the windows at either side of the fireplace, far from providing any light, appeared like dull, gray patches set in the wall.

The most striking object in the room was the great canopied bed, in which, if the tale were true, the Laird of Bludmanton had slept his last sleep. It was apparent that the hangings were of rich material, even through the thick layer of dust that covered them. They were caught back at one side, and the disarrayed bedding confirmed Sandy's description of the hasty exit of Sir Eric and his retainers. The other pieces of furniture were, three chairs, a beautifully carved table and two massive chests. As to the room itself, it had a beamed ceiling, paneled walls hung at intervals with faded tapestry, and a rough plank floor that creaked dismally when trod upon, covered with a filthy, moth-eaten carpet.

I returned to the fireplace, set out our tin plates, cups and eating utensils, broke the eggs into the hot bacon-grease, and went out to call Anderson. I hallooed loudly in the halway—and was answered by my own echo.

"What can be keeping him?" I wondered.

He should have returned within ten minutes, at least, for it was but a short walk to the courtyard where there was wood a plenty, and he had been gone a full twenty-five minutes. I made my way down the dark hallway, crossed the banquet-room, and, after threading the outer corridor, stepped through the arched doorway into the courtyard. Anderson was not in sight.

"Jack!" I called loudly, "O, Jack!"

A startled owl flew noisily from a niche behind me as I listened in vain for an answering cry. I knew that if Anderson were within hearing he would reply, so was sorely puzzled and not a little alarmed. He was of an inquisitive nature, and there was no telling what might have happened to him. I crossed to the postern gate, fully expecting to see him lying at the bottom of the moat, but my pocket flash-light revealed only the weed-grown banks, the mossy walls and the shimmering, gurgling streamlet at the bottom.

It seemed that there was nothing for it but to explore the castle from top to bottom, and I set about the task with a gloomy foreboding of danger which I found impossible to shake off.

After looking into every room and corridor on the courtyard level, I mounted the treacherous steps of a rickety turret and began a systematic search of the towers and battlements, flashing my light into all dark corners and over the steep walls at points where I thought it possible my impetuous friend might have fallen.

As I stood on the topmost battlement of the great tower, the thunder storm, which had been muttering ominously for some time, struck with considerable violence. Sheet after sheet of rain swept over me, drenching me to the skin. Forked lightning played about tower, turret and minaret, and the floor trembled under my feet at each terrific crash of thunder.

I leaped to the temporary shelter of the black tower room and, while the storm raged furiously without, attempted to dispel the threatening inner clouds of foreboding regarding the fate of my friend, by shedding the light of reason on them. I had examined every foot of floor space in the castle, or near it, without trace of my lost companion!

Most assuredly he had not run off and left me, for Anderson was not that sort. What, then, had become of him? I could think of but two possible solutions: either he had gone back to our rendezvous and, finding it untenanted, was at present searching for me, or somebody, or *something* had made away with him.

As the latter proposition seemed preposterous, the logical thing for me to do was to return to the master's bedchamber and wait for him.

I clambered down the wind-shaken turret, fought my way through the swirling torrents of rain in the court, and with the aid of my flash-light, reached the room without further incident. Anderson was not there, nor was there any sign that he had been there. The bacon and eggs were burned to a crisp, the coffee pot had boiled dry, and the fire was reduced to a heap of dull, red embers.

Placing the blackened cooking utensils on the hearth, I piled the remainder of my scanty stock of fuel on the glowing coals, fanned them to a flame, and stood close to dry my damp clothing. All thought of hunger had left me, my mind being completely occupied with the mysterious disappearance of my chum and the disquieting situation in which I found myself: alone in a great, dark, musty medieval castle, untenanted save by owls and vermin, and popularly supposed to be the abode of shrieking, gibbering ghosts.

I was not exactly afraid—not at that juncture, anyhow—but I must admit a feeling somewhat akin to fear crept over me as I mentally reviewed the story of Sandy Magruder and subconsciously connected it with Anderson's unknown fate.

I say "subconsciously" because, objectively, I would not admit to myself that there was such a thing as a ghost. I reasoned further, that even if there were such a thing—a dematerialized being, whose body consisted of nothing more ponderable than light, or perhaps vapor—it would be manifestly impossible for it either to make a noise or move physical objects. As to such a being flying off with my companion—absurd!

The fury of the storm gradually abated until it had settled down to a steady, pattering rain, with only occasional thunderclaps. This continued for perhaps an hour, then ceased entirely, and the only audible sound was the dripping of the water from eave and battlement. The comparative stillness was singularly depressing.

My last remaining fuel was reduced to a tiny heap of glowing embers, and I knew these would soon be gone—a matter of a half hour at most. Already the room was shrouded in murky gloom in which visible objects became faint, fantastic outlines.

I saw, or fancied I saw, a slight movement among the draperies of the laird's canopied bed. At the same instant a sound, apparently from a point directly behind me, caused me to whirl like an animal at bay, with every hair on my scalp bristling. It sounded like someone sliding or crawling across the floor, and was obviously *in the chamber*, yet I saw only the paneled wall and the dusty carpet at the point from which the sound emanated.

I tried to pull myself together.

"Must be rats or some other vermin rummaging in the chests," I thought. "Buck up, old boy. Remember, there is no such thing as a—"

My soliloquy was here interrupted by another sound—a sound that chilled the very marrow in my bones. It was distinctly *human* in character, a deep-drawn, sobbing sigh, as of a person just awakened from a bad dream or coming out from under the anaesthetic after an operation. I seized the rusted fire-tongs and waited breathlessly for someone or something to appear.

The tongs gave me a feeling of security, and I boldly explored the room, peering behind the tapestries and around and under the furniture. With the firm conviction that I had been suffering from an hallucination brought on by auto-suggestion, I went back to the canvas and unrolled my blanket, being by this time completely exhausted and sadly in need of sleep.

From early boyhood it has been my custom to wind my watch each evening before retiring. Automatically, I twirled the little burr between thumb and forefinger, and glanced at the dial as I did so. It lacked just one minute of eleven. Instantly recollections of old Sandy's reference to the hour of eleven flooded my mind. With them came the old feeling of dread, and a persistent, intuitive conviction that I was not alone in the room. I watched the little hand swiftly ticking off the seconds, with bated breath.

Eleven o'clock came and went without incident. I began to breathe more freely at eleven-fifteen, and was about to remove my boots, at the same time chiding myself for my groundless superstitious fear, when it came—a quivering, blood-curdling cry, half moan, half shriek, followed by low, pitiful groans as of someone in extreme pain or anguish.

Then I heard the sliding sound again, and loud knocks which seemed to come from the walls and ceiling of the chamber. At the same time my fire went out and I was left in total darkness.

The feeling that gripped me at that moment is difficult to describe. Those who have suffered from nightmare will know what I mean. Briefly, and as nearly as I can explain it, it is as if one were tightly bound with invisible, unyielding bands of the strength of tempered steel. Added to this there is a sensation of deadly fear, more terrible by far than is experienced when facing a tangible, visible danger.

I seemed rooted to the spot, unable to move even a finger. As the unearthly noises continued it seemed that the invisible bands about my chest tightened until breathing was next to impossible.

I made a supreme effort to break the spell, to move, to cry out. The result was a gurgling, inarticulate sound that I would never have recognized as coming from my own throat, a momentary vision of a thousand, scintillating, flashing sparks, and a merciful snapping of the thread of consciousness.

I am certain, as I pen these lines, that there are those who will condemn me for a coward and a fool, but I have resolved to tell no half-truths and to add no embellishments of my own that might serve to play me up as a hero. Comparatively few people have faced the inexplicable alone in the dark, consequently there are but few who can sympathize with me—few who would fully understand the horror of that moment.

To me, there is no fear so terrible as the fear of the unknown. I believe a positive knowledge of immediate death would be mild in comparison to it, and mind you, I had never been superstitious—never admitted, even to myself, the existence of supernatural benigs.

The fact that I lay in a cataleptic stupor in that room until dawn possibly saved my life. I am sure that it at least saved my reason.

When I awakened, the roseate glow of dawn from the two windows shed its soft radiance about the room. The fearsome noises had fled with the darkness. I remembered them as one might remember a bad dream. In fact, when I reviewed them in the light of day it seemed unreasonable to suppose that they had been anything more than a dream.

I was chilled to the bone and resolved first to build a fire in the grate, then renew my search for my lost companion. I knew the wood in the courtyard would be too damp for my purpose, so I searched some of the nearby rooms, all of which were provided with fireplaces, and found enough dry fuel.

With the fire kindled and my back to the blaze, I stood planning my next move, when I heard a faint, metallic tapping noise at my right. Startled and mystified by this new development, I listened breathlessly while the sound continued. Then, suddenly, I recognized the Morse code! Those raps were spelling "A-R-T H-E-L-P, A-R-T H-E-L-P."

In a flash, I realized that Anderson was in distress and trying to communicate with me.

I quickly traced the sounds to the paneled wall at my right.

"Jack!" I shouted. "Where are you, Jack?"

There was a faint, inarticulate whisper. Then the tapping continued:

"B-R-E-A-K D-O-W-N T-H-E W-A-L-L," it spelled.

I SEIZED the heavy andiron and swung it against the wall, thinking to smash the panel at a single blow, but discovered, to my surprise, that the panel was of steel, painted to resemble wood.

It was badly rusted, however, and soon gave way admitting me to a dark chamber in which I found my companion lying in a semi-stupor, more dead than alive. As I bent to pick him up, I stumbled on the bones of a mouldy skeleton, and noticed that it lay across a narrow dais on which was stretched a second skeleton at full length.

Without stopping to examine the ghastly contents of that grisly chamber I carried my chum to where my blanket was spread before the fire.

"Where are you hurt?" I asked.

He answered with great difficulty in a faint, hoarse whisper.

"Leg's broken—don't know what else. Get me a drink—something hot—and a doctor."

"I'll have some coffee for you in a jiffy," I replied, and, seizing the coffee pot, hurried through the familiar halls and corridors and across the drawbridge to the spring.

After scouring the char from the interior of the pot with a handful of sand and rinsing it thoroughly, I filled it with water and started back, when a familiar rumble greeted my ears, followed by the appearance of Sandy Magruder in his jaunting-cart. He tied the horse to a small sapling and came toward me with a basket on his arm.

"Thought ye might like some fresh eggs for breakfast," he said kindly. "And hoo did ye rest, the nicht?"

I thanked him for the gift, and explained the predicament of Anderson.

He offered to go to the village for a doctor, and, before leaving, handed me a pint bottle of Johnny Walker.

"Your freend will be needing a nip o' this," he said. "If Dr. MacReady's in I'll be back within the hour."

As he clattered off down the narrow lane, I turned and hurried back to the bedchamber. After a pull at the flask Anderson brightened up considerably.

While I was getting breakfast he found his voice and, despite my protest on account of his weakened condition, insisted on telling his story. His broken limb had grown numb, and it did not bother him so much as might be expected.

"When I left you last evening," he began, "I went out in the courtyard for firewood. The sight of the chapel windows, reflecting the rays of the setting sun, reminded me of that part of Sandy Magruder's story which had to do with the disappearance of the coffin from the tomb which was supposed to be near the place of worship. As I knew you had enough fuel to last for a considerable time, and it would not be dark for a half hour or more, I decided to do a little exploring and, if possible, learn if the story had any foundation in fact.

"After climbing the shaky turret, I made my way to the chapel and, sure enough, there was the marble tomb of the laird with a beautifully chiseled epitaph. I raised the ponderous lid to a vertical position with considerable difficulty, for the brass hinges had corroded and did not turn easily. The tomb was empty, and appeared to be of solid masonry, but I wished to make sure, so lowered myself inside.

"Scarcely had my feet touched the bottom when the lid closed with a loud bang, the floor opened beneath me, and I shot swiftly down a smooth chute of polished wood. When I reached the bottom my right leg crumpled under me, my head struck against something hard, and I lost consciousness.

"It must have been some little time before I regained my senses. My head ached, and a sharp pain shot through my leg when I moved, so that I cried out in agony. As I was in total darkness I took out my pocket flash-light and looked about me.

"I was in a small, square room three sides of which were built of solid masonry. The fourth side was rusted steel, riveted in such a way as to suggest paneling. There was a steel door in the stone wall at my left, which evidently fastened from the other side, for I could not pry it open. A wooden chute curved down beneath it and straightened out to a horizontal position above the floor. On this, a leaden casket rested.

"Evidently both the casket and I had come through that door, which could be pushed open from above, but could not be budged from the inside. What impressed and horrified me the most, however, was the proximity of two human skeletons, the smaller lying across the larger, which was stretched on a narrow, raised platform.

"I dragged myself to the metal partition, each movement wringing a groan from my lips, and pounded on it at intervals in the hope of attracting your attention. I beat and shouted until my voice sunk to a whisper, without avail.

"At length I grew weak from my exertions and numb from the cold, and desisted. It was then that my attention was attracted to a rusty poniard with a jeweled handle, lying beside the coffin. Above it were a number of scratches which looked like writing. I moved closer and read an explanation of the disappearance of the terrible laird's young and beautiful wife, written by her own hand.

"Briefly, it states that on the night of the banquet, her husband summoned her to his room. In his hand was a huge silver goblet from which he commanded her to drink the health of the young minister. Mystified by this strange request, but ever obedient to the command of her lord, she placed the vessel to her lips—then cast it from her in horror. Instead of wine, *it was filled with fresh, warm blood!*

"With a demoniac grin on his face, Sir Malcolm strode to the wall, and reaching under a tapestry, pulled a hidden lever, whereupon a section of paneling slid upward, revealing her former lover lying on a dais with face pale and drawn. His left arm dangled limply over the edge, and the last of his life-blood dripped from a slash in his wrist to an urn on the floor.

"'You have drunk a toast to your lover in his own blood,' said her husband. 'Now go and spend the few remaining days you have on earth with his filthy carcass.'

"He gave her a push that sent her headlong into the aperture, and the paneling closed behind her, leaving her in total darkness. She fell in a swoon that lasted for hours. When she regained consciousness, she groped her way about the place, but could find no exit. Upon touching the brow of the young minister she found it cold in death. There were food and wine in the room, placed there by her husband to prolong her agony, but she knew she was doomed eventually to die from starvation.

"It was just as the chapel bell tolled the hour of eleven that she placed the cup of blood to her lips, and each evening when she heard the bell at that hour the memory of it brought on prolonged fits of weeping.

"On the fourth night, she heard the cursing and raving of her husband as on previous nights, and also his instructions to his nephew regarding the disposition of his body. She felt that the hour of her deliverance was at hand, and shrieked with might and main, but instead of bringing the young laird and his retainers to her rescue, she frightened them from the room.

"The next day the coffin, which she knew contained the remains of her fiendish husband, suddenly slid into the room, and as all sounds about the castle were stilled shortly after, she rightly guessed that it had been abandoned.

"With all hope of rescue gone, she took the blood-caked poniard which had slashed the wrist of the martyred young minister, and inscribed her story on the side of the leaden casket. She worked in total darkness solely by the sense of touch, as the irregularity of the characters will testify, keeping at her task for two days after her food supply was exhausted in order that future generations might know the truth. At the end she emphatically denied any improper relations with the minister, and commended her spirit to her maker."

SANDY arrived in due time with Dr. MacReady, who set my friend's leg, and helped me to convey him to the cart in which we took him to the nearest village.

The story of our discovery spread like wild-fire, and for several days we were besieged by newspaper reporters. People journeyed from far and near to sate their morbid curiosity in that chamber of horrors, which I was more than glad to be away from. A month later we sailed for the United States.

I am writing these lines in the front room of an apartment which Anderson and I have taken in New York City. On the table before me lies a rusty poniard with a gaily jeweled hilt. It has a historic value which far exceeds its intrinsic worth, for through its instrumentality I am able to reveal to the world the ghastly secret of Bludmanton Castle.

A Remarkable Article, Translated from the French "Histoire De La Magie" of Alphonse Louis Constant, Paris, 1860. Prepared for WEIRD TALES by C. P. OLIVER

BLACK MAGIC

Being the True Story of Gilles de Laval, Baron de Raiz, Marshal of France, Sorcerer and Murderer

IN THE entire history of mankind, there is no stranger or more weird story than that of Gilles de Laval, Baron of Raiz and Marshal of France.

A brave and gallant soldier under Charles VII, the services of Gilles de Laval to France could not counterbalance the extent and enormity of his crimes.

All tales of devils and sorcerers were realized and surpassed by the terrible deeds of this fantastic scoundrel, whose history has been engraved upon the memory of children under the name of Bluebeard, for the fable by that title was written around the crimes of the Lord of Raiz.

Gilles de Laval had indeed so black a beard that it seemed to be almost blue, as is shown by his portrait in the Salle de Marechaux, at the Museum of Versailles.

A Marshal of France, de Laval was a brave man; being rich, he was also ostentatious; and he became a sorcerer because he was insane.

The insanity of the Lord of Raiz became manifested, in the first instance, by his sumptuous devotion to religion and by his extravagant magnificence.

When he went abroad, he was preceded by cross and banner; his chaplains were covered with gold and velvet; and he had a choir of little pages, who were always richly clothed.

But, day by day, one of these children was called before the marshal and was seen no more by his comrades; a newcomer succeeded him who disappeared, and the children were sternly forbidden to ask what had become of the missing ones, or even to refer to them among themselves.

These children were obtained by the marshal from poor parents, whom he dazzled by his promises, and whom he pledged to trouble no further concerning their offspring, who, according to his story, were assured a brilliant future.

The explanation is that, in his case, seeming devotion was the mask and safeguard of infamous crimes.

Ruined by imbecile prodigality, the marshal desired at any cost to create wealth.

A believer in alchemy, he had exhausted his last resources in the pursuit of his hobby, and loans on usurious terms were about to fail him; he therefore determined to attempt the last and most execrable experiments of Black Magic, in the hope of obtaining gold by the aid of hell.

An unfrocked priest, a Florentine named Perlati, and Sille, who was the marshal's steward, became his confidantes and accomplices.

Gilles de Laval had married a young and beautiful woman of high rank only a few months before, whom he kept practically a prisoner in his castle at Machecoul, which had a tower with the entrance walled up.

A report was spread by the marshal that this tower was in a ruinous state and that no one sought to penetrate therein.

Notwithstanding this, Madame de Laval, who was frequently alone during the night hours, saw red lights moving to and fro in this tower; but she did not venture to question her husband, whose bizarre and somber character filled her with extreme terror.

ON Easter Day in the year 1440, Marshal de Laval, having taken solemn communion in his chapel, bade farewell to his wife, telling her that he was departing for the Holy Land to join the Crusades; the poor creature was even then afraid to question him, so much did she tremble in his presence.

Before leaving, the marshal informed her that he was permitting her sister to visit her during his absence, and as he spoke the sister, Annie by name, arrived.

After her husband's departure, Madame de Laval communicated to her sister her fears and anxieties.

What went on in the castle every night?

Why was her lord so gloomy and what signified his repeated absences?

What became of the children who disappeared day by day?

What were those nocturnal lights in the walled-up tower?

These and other questions excited the curiosity of both women to the utmost.

What could they find out during the marshal's absence?

He had forbidden them expressly even to approach the tower, and before leaving had repeated this injunction, but woman's curiosity could not thus be conquered, and the two women set out to seek the entrance to the forbidden tower.

It must assuredly have a secret entrance, argued Madame de Laval, and after an hour's search throughout the lower rooms of the castle, the two two women found a copper button located in the chapel and behind the altar, which yielded to pressure and caused a stone to slide back, revealing the lowermost steps of a staircase, which led them to the condemned tower.

At the top of the first flight there was a kind of chapel, with a cross upside down and black candles; on the altar stood a hideous figure, representing the devil.

On the second floor they came upon furnaces, retorts, alembics, charcoal—in a word, all the apparatus of alchemy. The third flight led to a dark chamber, where a heavy and fetid atmosphere compelled the two young women to retreat.

Madame de Laval came into collision with a vase, which fell over, and she was conscious that her robe and feet were soaked by some thick and unknown liquid. On returning to the

light at the head of the stair, she found that she was bathed in blood.

Her sister Annie would have fled from the place, but Madame de Laval's curiosity was stronger than fear, and she returned to the room again, taking with her a lamp from the infernal chapel.

She now perceived a frightful spectacle, for, ranged the whole length of the room were copper basins filled with blood and each bearing a label containing a date, and in the middle of the room there was a black marble table, on which lay the body of a child, quite recently murdered.

It was one of these basins which had fallen, and the black blood had spread far and wide on the grimy and worm-eaten wooden floor.

The two women were now half dead with terror, but Madame de Laval endeavored at all costs to remove the evidence of her indiscretion.

She went in search of a sponge and water, to wash the boards; but she only extended the stain, and that which at first seemed black became scarlet in hue.

Suddenly a loud commotion echoed throughout the castle, mixed with the cries of people calling for Madame de Laval. She distinguished the startling words: "The Marshal has returned!"

The two women rushed for the staircase, but at the same moment they were aware of the trampling of steps and the sound of voices in the devil's chapel.

The sister, Annie, fled upward to the battlement of the tower; while Madame de Laval went down, trembling, and found herself face to face with her husband, in the act of ascending, accompanied by the sorcerer Prelati and Sille, the steward.

Gilles de Laval seized his wife by the arm, and, without speaking, dragged her into the infernal chapel.

It was then that Prelati, the sorcerer, spoke, saying:

"It must be, as you see, and the victim has come of her own accord."

"Be it so," replied his master. "Begin the Black Mass."

The unfrocked priest went to the altar, while Gilles de Laval opened a little cupboard fixed therein and drew out a large knife, after which he sat down beside his wife, who was now almost in a swoon and lying in a heap upon a bench near the wall.

The sacrilegious ceremony now began, with Perlati, the sorcerer, repeating the Mass backward, which was the invocation to the Devil to appear.

HERE it should be explained that the marshal, so far from starting for the Crusades, had proceeded only to Nantes, where Prelati lived; he attacked this miserable wretch with the utmost fury and threatened to slay him if he did not furnish the means of extracting gold from the Devil by the aid of Black Magic.

With the object of obtaining delay, Prelati declared that terrible conditions were required by his infernal master, first among which would be the sacrifice of the marshal's wife with her unborn child (for Madame de Laval was soon to become a mother) on the Devil's altar.

To this horrible suggestion, Gilles de Laval made no reply, but returned at once to Machecoul, Prelati and Sille, the steward, accompanying him.

In the meanwhile, Annie, sister of Madame de Laval, left to her own devices on the roof of the tower and not daring to come down, had removed her veil, to make signals of distress on the chance of attracting help.

They were answered by two cavaliers, accompanied by a troop of horsemen, who were riding toward the castle; they proved to be her two brothers who, on learning of the spurious departure of the marshal for Palestine, had come to visit and console Madame de Laval.

They soon rode into the court of the castle with a clatter of hoofs, whereupon Gilles de Laval suspended the hideous ceremony and said to his wife:

"Madame, I forgive your meddling, and the matter is at an end between us, if you now do as I tell you.

"Return to your apartment, change your garments and join me and your brothers in the guest-room, whither I am going to meet them.

"But if you say one word, or cause them the slightest suspicion, I will bring you hither on their departure; we shall proceed with the Black Mass at the point where it is now broken off, and at the consecration you will die.

"Mark where I place this knife."

He then rose, led his wife to the door of her chamber and subsequently received her relatives and their suite, saying that his wife was preparing herself to come and salute her brothers.

Madame de Laval almost immediately appeared, pale as a specter. Her husband never took his eyes off her, seeking to control her by his glance.

When her brothers asked if she was ill, she answered that she was only fatigued, but added in an undertone: "Save me; he seeks to kill me."

At the same moment her sister, Annie, rushed into the room, crying:

"Take us away; save us, my brothers: this man is an assassin"—and she pointed to Gilles de Laval.

While the marshal cried out for his retainers, the escort of the two visitors surrounded the two women with drawn swords; and when the marshal's men arrived, they were ordered to stand back or fight.

While de Laval's retainers hesitated, Madame de Laval, with her sister and brothers, gained the drawbridge, mounted and galloped off.

They hurried to the neighboring city of Nantes, where information regarding the marshal's crimes was laid before the authorities, who at once ordered de Laval's arrest.

A troop of horse surrounded the castle of the marshal and he was, without resistance, placed under arrest and placed in the prison at Nantes.

The civil authorities desired to try him for murder, but the Inquisition intervened and demanded that he be turned over to the Ecclesiastical Court to answer charges of Sorcery and Heresy.

Now throughout the surrounding country, rose the voices of parents, long silenced by terror, demanding their missing children: there was dole and outcry throughout the province.

The castles of Machecoul and Chantoce were ransacked, resulting in the discovery of over three hundred skeletons of children; the rest had been consumed by fire.

Two months later Gilles de Laval appeared before the judges of the Inquisition. He was as arrogant and proud as ever and refused to answer their questions or to admit their authority over him.

But this haughty insolence was demolished by the threat of torture, and he ended by confessing that, aided by Prelati, ex-priest and sorcerer, and Sille, the steward, he had murdered, during a period of three years, over eight hundred children.

Pressed for his motive, he replied that he enjoyed an execrable delight during the death agony of the poor little beings.

The president of the Inquisition found it difficult to credit his statements and questioned him anew, but received no other answer.

That which Gilles de Laval shrank from confessing was that he sought the Elixir of Everlasting Life, which, so he had been told by Prelati, was to be found in mixing the blood of fresh slain children with salt, sulphur and mercury, and this horrible concoction was to be drunk while warm.

(Continued on page 88)

An Unseen, Terrifying "Thing" Dwelt in

The Devil's Cabin

By VANCE HOYT

I SHALL never forget those torturing days we spent in the nightmare jungle near the Jalan river.

Placer gold we obtained, to be sure; but there were other things that left their indelible imprints upon the memory. Chief among these was the fiend Rodriquez and the manner in which he was known as "La Fiera," the beast!

As a trail man and master of camp, Rodriquez probably never had an equal. But a thorough knowledge of pack, and the superhuman understanding of a mule, is not everything.

A halfbreed of Mexican peonage and Yaqui Indian was Rodriquez. Never shaven, his fat, swarthy countenance was indicative of the blood that flowed in his veins. His neck was short and powerful, like a gorilla's. Jet-black, greasy hair grew far down on his forehead to a slight space above the cruel, pig-like eyes. Everything about Rodriquez—every move, every attitude of his body—was that of a vicious animal.

He was commonly known as "a killer." Some proclaimed that he was possessed by a devil. Others that he was mad.

But not until we had obtained from our guide, the mozo, the cause of his scorpion-like hatred of Rodriquez did we learn for ourselves, Bill and I, the reason why he was feared and dreaded among the natives.

The incident had occurred several years before when the halfbreed made camp near the casa where Alamondo lived with his wife. There was no reason for the native to mistrust the man, never having heard of La Fiera before. But one day his wife complained of advances Rodriquez had made toward her.

The mozo demanded an explanation, but the halfbreed merely laughed in his beastly way and said nothing.

That night, when Alamondo returned to his casa, he found his wife dead, a stiletto in her breast. La Fiera had attacked her, and she, in her distress, had thrust the dagger into her heart.

Alamondo swore vengeance!

Then came the moment of reckoning. A curse—the flash of steel—! But the little mozo lost his nerve. When he recovered, there was an ear missing!

After that, Alamondo never could summon sufficient courage to repeat the attack. He lived in fear of the beast. And so it was, when we emerged from the jungle into a small clearing where stood the "devil's cabin!"

It was late in the evening, and I proposed that we bunk for the night in the deserted, log-adobe hut. But the mozo instantly fell upon his knees at my feet, seemingly terror-stricken at the suggestion.

"Hay diablo, senor!" he warned. *"Si, gran diablo!"*

Not knowing the significance of his fright, I laughed and said to Bill, my partner, jocularly:

"Do you hear? *Gran diablo,* says the mozo. A big devil. Eh, Alamondo? A big devil!"

But the next instant, I stood speechless.

On the still, hot air of the approaching night, came the shrill scream of Felis Discolor, the black leopard.

"And I heard that, too," spoke up Bill, reaching for his Winchester. "I'm no coward, but I be dog-goned if I'm going to sleep in any ramshackle cabin even a native won't go near. Mebbe there's a devil in it and mebbe there isn't; but I'm not going to bunk in it to find out. No, siree! My hammock in the open is good enough for me."

Bill always was an obstinate cuss, so I paid no heed to what he said. I began questioning the mozo as to what he thought was lurking in the lonely hut.

It seemed that the cabin had not been inhabited for many years, perhaps hundreds—*"quien sabe"*—Alamondo did not know. Stray natives and travelers who had slept within its walls, seeking shelter from the poisonous jungle air, had invariably been all but murdered by some invisible devil. Several had been found terribly mutilated, and one native, whom the mozo knew personally, had died from wounds that would not heal.

No one ever had possessed courage sufficient to enter the hut and discover what the evil "thing" might be. Thus, in the uncertainty as to just what the "thing" was, everyone, light-footed and alert, swerved past the cabin at a respectable distance, crossing themselves and muttering: *"Hay diablo!"*

"Well, Bill, old-timer," I said, after turning the guide's story over in my mind; "here's where I tucker-it-out alone. Might as well die by the hand of the devil as the fever from sleeping in the open. Here goes!"

Bill stood looking in the direction of the cabin, rather chagrined. It was a bitter pill for him to swallow. He was no coward, this partner of mine. Back in the mining days of Klondyke, on a bet, he had gone into a cage with a mountain lion and bled the cat with a butcher knife.

However, this was physical bravery. Bill was not so certain of himself mentally. So he kept peace with his soul and had nothing further to say. Save that it was poor judgment to seek risks that even a native declined.

This slur upon my judgment sealed the question right then and there. I was going to sleep in that haunted cabin, devil or no devil, or know the reason why.

Rupert Hughes

After Reading "The Devil's Cabin"

Wrote to the Author:

"Dear Dr. Hoyt:

"It seems to be part of my job to have to read the manuscripts of poor devils who can't write. I had just written two letters to such unfortunates (breaking my heart and theirs) when I took up your story.

"It was a double joy to find it vividly and vigorously written, and to be genuinely thrilled by it. It gave me 'the cold spine,' which I have not enjoyed for a long time. I should think that any editor would be glad to buy it.

"(Signed) RUPERT HUGHES."

I GOT up from the camp-fire and examined my Colt, a special .38-caliber on a forty-four frame, slipping an extra belt of cartridges about my waist.

I stood for a moment observing the hunkered form of Rodriquez hovered near the fire, where he was roasting the meat of a monkey he had slain for his meal. He had had nothing to say pertaining to the "devil's cabin," exhibiting not the slightest interest in our conversation.

As I watched him, more than ever, in the crouched position, he resembled the aspects of a beast. And in the flicker of the light, I thought I caught the faint traces of a cruel, crafty smile on his dark face as he sniffed at the odor of the roasting meat.

For a moment, I stood studying the man at his task. He had been left severely alone. None of the natives would have anything to do with him. He had moved back upon his haunches, like a dog, and sat tearing and gnawing at the steaming meat with his strong, yellow teeth—the beast that he was!

As I stood there, observing the grim scene before me, from somewhere back in the jungle came the weird cries of a howler, seemingly booming his wrath at the death of kith and kin.

In the stillness that followed, I heard the rustling of creeping things; the faint chirpings of metallic throats; the whir of fluttering wings and the purr and hissing of slinking creatures—evidences of a thousand living things, unseen but seeing—the ever-moving, sticky, hot jungle at night time!

And as I stood there, scanning the darkness about us, two tiny diamonds caught my eye, twinkling in their yellow and green brilliancy. Further back, in the black void, another set of living gems, flashed their fire.

I stared at them, for the moment fascinated, not certain at first of just what I saw. They seemed to creep toward me with no perceptible motion, as a scene on the screen is focused closer by a moving lens.

Suddenly they vanished, as quickly as they had appeared. Then came a scream that brought my spine stiffly erect; the most terrifying cry I had ever heard! And two slender shadows, noiseless as a feather, cleaved the crescent of light from the camp-fire and vanished into the brush opposite.

Then another, and another, and another of these nightmare screeches—the blood-curdling voice of the jaguar!

In the palm of my hand I held the handle of my revolver, but the lightning bodies of the lithe creatures disappeared so quickly there was no time for a shot.

Rodriquez scarcely looked up from where he sat crouched, gnawing the steaming meat of the monkey. The native carriers moved in nearer the fire, and Bill sat peering into the brush where the cats had disappeared.

But the mozo—! Terror had seized the man. He fell upon his knees before me in a frenzy, muttering a prayer and begging of me to tie a little red sack he held in his hand about my neck! He said it would keep the devil away.

Piqued at such superstition, but rather than offend him, I did as he asked, declining the trouble of ascertaining just what the little red sack contained—save that a pungent odor came from its contents.

The poor fellow was so evidently pleased with the acceptance of his "devil-killer" that all fears for my safety seemed instantly to leave him. And as though it had in some mysterious way instilled a spark of bravery in the native himself, he deliberately walked over and entered into conversation with La Fiera.

The move was so abrupt and foreign to his nature that I marveled at the confidence he held in his belief and faith in the powers of the little red sack.

But it was growing late, and I was tired and sleepy, so I did not take the pains to investigate the subject of their conversation. Thus, equipped with my trusty revolver and the odoriferous voodoo sack, I took up my blanket and sauntered into the black void of the night.

I SPENT considerable time in locating the makeshift door, which was really no door at all, but several logs stood on end and lashed together by tough vines and jungle grass. After much exertion, I managed to pry the logs apart sufficiently to worm my way into the interior of the hut.

For a moment, I stood listening and peering about in the dense darkness of the close, musty-smelling room. Assuring myself finally that I was alone, I relaxed my vigilance, lit a candle, and began to investigate.

My attention was first attracted to the floor. It was constructed of a series of split logs laid across sleepers, a foot or more above the ground. The logs creaked and rocked as I moved over them, exhibiting in several places holes large enough for a man's body to slip through. All of which was an unusual floor in this country. They almost always consist of plain earth, trampled to the solidity of concrete.

In the wall near the camp, I discovered an opening, which, in all probability, was once meant for a window. It was really a large chink between the logs which had been plastered up with mud. I finally succeeded in tearing away the mud for purposes of dissipating the foul air that had accumulated in the long pent-up room.

Beneath the window, my eyes rested upon an old bunk securely fastened to the logs at the height of my knees. It was made of branches of trees, cut and lashed together with strips of split vines. A crude and rough affair.

However, here was my resting-place for the night. It was, at any rate, solid and firm. No sliding and shifting in an elusive hammock for me, turning turtle and fetching up with the earth, face foremost.

As I stood there, thrilling to the thought that I had chanced upon this piece of luck in finding a fairy couch where I might stretch and ease the muscles of my tired body, something caught and held my interest for a considerable time. On the bunk, and along the side of the wall, were several dark-brown stains, some more red and fresh than others.

I bent forward to the muddy logs of the wall, then down to the matted work of the bunk, with the lighted candle before me, so that I might examine more closely and minutely these stains, and, to my horror, I discovered that they were splotches of blood!

There is always something in the sight of blood that forces one to sniff, to become alert, and in the movements of the body to direct them more swiftly.

I wheeled about, taking in at a sweep every lurking shadow the sputtering light of the candle flitted into the far corners of the room. There was nothing to be seen, nothing to be heard except the humming of a few insects that had come in through the window.

I released my grasp upon the handle of the revolver, then looked about, cautiously. I raised and lowered the candle, moved over the loose logs, got down upon my knees to scrutinize the flooring more carefully.

Here, I found more splotches of blood. A considerable amount in one place, which had soaked into the log, thick and dark—blood that had not been spilt so very long!

I arose and stood near the window looking out toward the camp-fire, thoughtfully. Except for the space it illumined in the dense wilderness, everywhere there was total darkness. It was the dark of the moon.

Alamondo and Rodriquez were still in conversation. The little native stood very near the powerful, slouching form of La Fiera. There was not the least sign of fear in his attitude toward the

halfbreed. They were excitedly arguing some question which seemed to be of intense interest to both.

All the while, the mozo prodded the camp-fire, which he had kindled into a bonfire. He was wildly gesticulating and waving his hand toward the cabin wherein I stood. Now and then his hand wandered to the stub of the severed ear as though it pained him. And once, when the beast stooped and lighted his cigarro with a burning brand, I saw Alamondo quickly place something in the pocket of the halfbreed's cotton jacket.

The rest of the party could be seen in their hammocks, swung in the trees nearby. They looked rather snug and comfortable beneath their nettings.

For a long time I stood observing the mozo and La Fiera in their talk, marveling at the mysterious change that had suddenly come over the native and wondering what he could have placed so stealthily in his enemy's pocket.

But no explanation could I conjure to solve the enigma. So I turned my attention to the crackling sound in the near brush. A noise like an animal crunching brittle bones. Peccaries, I thought; the rooting, grunting scavengers of the jungle.

Then it occurred to me for the first time; perhaps Bill was right, and, after all, I was wrong. But there was no backing down now. I had chosen my course. Man, devil or beast, could not force me to sleep elsewhere.

Thus, without further thought on the subject, I blew out the candle, wrapped my blanket about me, and, Colt in hand, was soon lost to the world.

I DO NOT know how long I slept. But it must have been after midnight when I awakened. Not suddenly, as one is usually aroused in moments of danger, but gradually, a degree at a time.

So natural was my awakening, that for several moments, I lay listening to the muffled ticking of the timepiece in the pocket of my trousers.

There is something soothing, mesmeric, about the ticking of the delicate works of a watch in the dead hours of night. And often, in the wilderness, have I returned to conscious life under the hypnotic, metallic voice of man's most timely friend. So it did not occur to me that my awakening was unusual, or that everything was not as it should be.

But as I lay there, restful, perfectly at peace with the world, dozing, lingering in a semi-conscious state, it suddenly dawned upon me that I was not alone. I sensed inwardly, rather than felt outwardly, that there was some living thing in the room besides myself. Instantly I was awake and in perfect control of my senses, tense and alert.

A velvety soft, with now and then a grating, sound came to me from out the Egyptian darkness, like the scaly body of a huge snake crawling through dry grass. A tense moment passed. Then a strong, acrid odor assailed me, equally as revolting as that of the voodoo sack about my neck.

Cautiously, I came to a semi-sitting posture, revolver in hand and finger crooked for action. I was not to be taken by surprise. Breathlessly, I awaited the intruder's attack.

In the dense darkness I could see nothing, save now and then the phosphorescent glimmer of a vagrant lightning beetle that had flown into the hut.

I peered about the room, seeking to discern what living thing, man, beast or devil, confronted me. I stared until my eyeballs ached, but no object could I make out. Then my attention was suddenly attracted to the floor where something was lightly rocking the loose logs.

For some time I listened to this cradling of the planking, exerting my wits to fathom the cause of so peculiar a phenomenon.

At first, the thought had occurred to me that it might be some one of our party who had worked his way into the place to test my nerve. But I immediately dismissed this from my mind. The risk would be too great for a sane man to take. But then, what was it?

There was only one answer. I would have to find out!

I rose to my feet and gingerly stepped into the center of the room, listening for the faintest sound. But nothing was audible, save the stifled gasps of my breathing. The noise had suddenly ceased.

A flood of thoughts went skittering through my mind. Then it suddenly dawned upon me. This "thing" had deliberately moved away as I approached it. It had passed along the planking as quickly and noiselessly as a gliding reptile. I felt certain that it was neither human nor animal.

But what could it be?

However, it did not matter. There was but one remedy!

I leveled my revolver in the direction of the "thing" that must be somewhere before me. But before I had completed the movement, I was conscious that it had vanished—seemingly into space.

For the first time in my life, I felt a sense of terror tugging at my throat. Here was an enemy that had me helplessly at its mercy. There was no way of determining to where the "thing" had vanished. It might at that very second be crouched directly behind me, preparing to spring

A cold sweat crept over me. I instantly wheeled about, tense for the attack.

In the black void before me, I sensed that something moved. Now over here —now over there—behind me—in front of me—! Then I caught the heavy breath of the "thing" directly above my head.

I gasped and looked up.

TWO RED EYES, piercing as balls of fire, stared into my face. The warmth of its breath was upon my cheek and its odor was revolting!

Without thought, I sprang back and began discharging my revolver at this devil that was closing in on me from all sides.

A series of blood-curdling screams, human in their fierceness, filled the quietness of the room as if a thousand infuriated demons had sprung into the place, dancing to the staccato of my revolver.

There was a rush, a mad scramble. Something dashed over my head and out through the window with the swish of a monster bat. The rickety cabin shook as if in a tempest. Huge forms lurched about me and against the walls, tearing and rocking the logs of the floor in frantic desperation to escape the zipping fire of hot lead.

From outside came the reverberating roar of a living thing, and I knew something was leaving a trail of blood.

I sprang to the window to see if I could discern what I had hit. But in the blackness I could see nothing—except Bill, rifle in hand, revealed in the glare of the camp-fire, running towards me. The mozo, with a lighted pitch-pine knot, was following closely at his heels. Rodriquez was nowhere to be seen.

With the aid of the flaring torch, I saw a huge form lying near the foot of the bunk. I had stooped to examine the "thing" more closely, when the mozo caught me by the arm.

"Ay! Ay!" he shrieked. "Come away! Come away! *Jalingo! Jalingo!*"

I looked at the native sharply. There was in the tone of his voice all the evidence of extreme fright. But in the man's face I was not so easily deceived. There was a crafty, cunning expression in every feature.

But before I could express the thought that occurred to me, he crossed himself and stepped back into the darker portion of the room.

In the meantime, with the barrel of his Winchester, Bill had turned the

"thing" over that lay in a hairy mass at our feet.

We had never seen such a monster before. It stood about four feet high, resembling a Gibbon ape more than anything else I could recall. It was of a brownish color, except for its face, which was white. Among the natives, it is known as the "Jalingo," a thing to be dreaded when encountered in the jungle. The male possesses a long, white beard, not unlike the Great Wanderoo, and walks erect most of the time. The female fondles and nurses the young in her arms. They are seldom seen in the daytime, but roam the forest at night and are very ferocious in combat.

The mystery of the log-adobe was solved! There was no devil in the cabin, after all.

I had moved back to examine the Jalingo more carefully, when I felt something soft under my stockinged foot, like the body of a snake. I quickly looked down and found that I had stepped upon the arm of a man. The upper portion was red and bloody. The fingers were crooked and distorted in a convulsive grip that clutched several tufts of coarse hair. There was nothing else in sight as I glanced about for the body.

Bill and I looked at each other in horror.

"I'll say there was a devil in here, all right!" he gasped. Then, suddenly:

"Look out, pard! What's that behind you?"

I wheeled about, instantly.

"Where?" I gulped, a sickening sensation quivering within me.

"There," he said, pointing at a large rent in the floor. "Wait! I'll turn this log over."

As he did so, the crouching form of a huge male Jalingo was revealed beneath the flooring. A prodding with the rifle convinced us that he was quite dead.

"Turn it over if you can," I suggested, leaning closer. "We'll—"

"Look!" suddenly exclaimed Bill drawing back. "The greaser — the beast—! Great God!"

I peered eagerly into the dark cavity beneath the flooring. The sight that met my eyes recalled scenes I had witnessed in the bloody trenches of France.

I never want to see such a sight again. Before me lay La Fiera and one of the Jalingos, both devils that they were, locked in the grim embrace of death's struggle. The long, yellow fangs of the fierce ape had bitten clear through the neck of the halfbreed and all but severed the head from the body. Through the chest of each, a bullet from my revolver, had put an end to the struggle!

I shuddered in horror at the thought of what might have happened to me, and turned away.

"How do you suppose Rodriquez came to be in here?" I finally asked, wiping the moisture from my face. "I didn't see him in the room."

"Don't ask me," replied my partner. "I'm no detective. The last I saw the greaser, he and the mozo were talking near the camp-fire. I heard the native accuse the peon of being a coward and dared him to enter the cabin and give you a scare. They were still arguing when I fell asleep. How about it, Alamondo?"

We both turned to the mozo for an explanation. The little fellow stepped forward as straight as an Indian and as steady in eye and nerve. There was not the slightest indication of fear in the man.

"Alamondo is avenged!" he spoke in the vernacular, hissing the words through clenched teeth. "La Fiera was big and strong, while Alamondo is little and not so strong as the beast. But I kill him, carrion in the mud beneath my feet! Kill him with my mind!"

"How do you mean, Alamondo?" I asked, greatly interested.

"*Si, Senor!* I kill him with my mind. Alamondo knows much of the ways of the jungle. Jalingo does not like the smell of roasted monkey meat. Jalingo becomes a devil—*gran diablo!*—goes mad and tears the flesh of those who eat it.

"See, *senores,* the scar on Alamondo's arm—shoulder—neck—*Caramba!* Alamondo knows from experience. *Ay, yi!* When La Fiera ate the monkey meat Alamondo all the time smiled to himself.

"And, *senores,* once when the beast did not see, Alamondo filled his pocket with the odor of roasted monkey. Aha-a! *Si,* all the time Alamondo knew the Jalingo devils haunted the jackal. And—and—

"*De veras! Si, senores,*" he grated, glaring at the gruesome sight that lay before us. "He who lives as a beast shall die like a beast! *Sabe, senores? Sangre de Cristo!* La Fiera is dead! Alamondo is avenged! The beast is dead!"

"*Bueno! Bueno!*" approved Bill, who was never known to be serious long. "Clever you are, Alamondo. But I'm thinking it's mighty queer those Jalingo devils didn't make it hot for this fat-headed pard of mine. How about that?"

"Ah! *Nombre de Dios!*" muttered the mozo, crossing himself and bending to his knees at my feet. "*Si, senor. Dios! Dios!*" he continued, indicating that the Jalingo could not harm me so long as I wore the little red sack he had placed about my neck. "Alamondo knows much in his brain. See, *senores?* I will show you."

So saying, he took from his neck a little red sack, similar to the one he had given me. He tore it open, exposing its contents; a light-yellow powder, made from the leaves of some jungle plant.

"See! Cayamuela! Smell! Ugh! Jalingo fears the odor. Cayamuela makes his teeth fall out when he eats it and he will die. *Si, senores.* Alamondo knows much. *Perfectamente!*"

Bill and I stood staring at each other, marveling at the strategy of the tropical mind in wreaking its vengeance.

The score between La Fiera, the beast, and Alamondo, the mozo, was settled!

Startling Indeed Were the Ghostly Night Riders That Haunted

The Old Burying Ground

A Complete Novelette

By EDGAR LLOYD HAMPTON

HISTORICALLY speaking, the Clearwater River, in the Western part of the state of Idaho, has never been anything more important than a rather indefinite location, with a name attached.

That is to say, its basin has never been developed; for the Gods who made the mountains left it lying helpless between the various, main-traveled roads to the Pacific. A generation ago the Oregon Short Line, thrusting a covetous arm of steel along the Snake River, en route to Portland, Oregon, veered off suddenly and passed it a hundred miles to southward. Later the N. P., hurrying across the summit of the Bitter Roots, on its journey to Seattle, left it isolated, fifty miles to the North.

Thus civilization slipped by on either side and left the Clearwater inviolate. No white man set his cabin on its river bank; no woman rocked a baby cradle anywhere beneath its whispering trees.

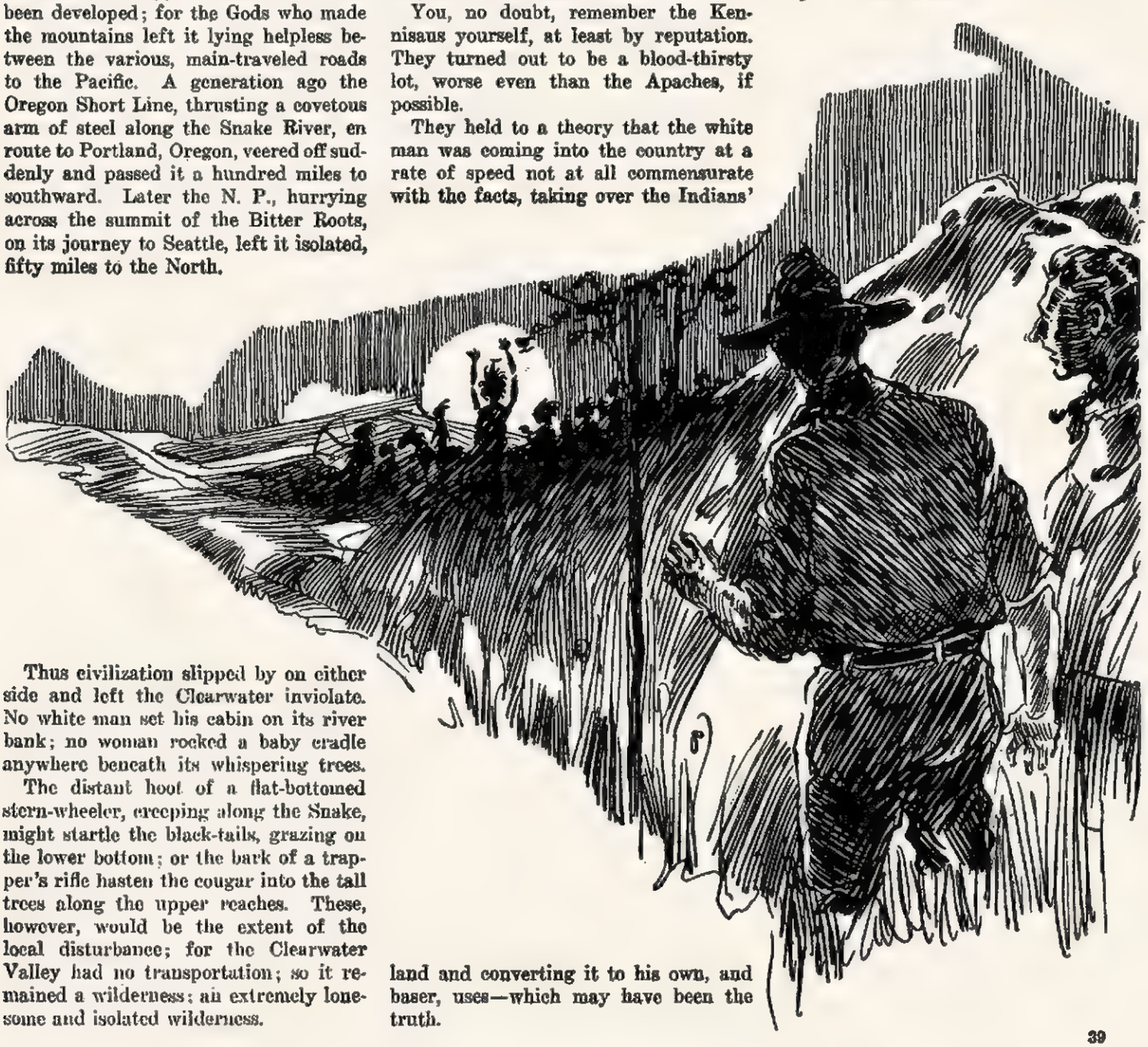
The distant hoot of a flat-bottomed stern-wheeler, creeping along the Snake, might startle the black-tails, grazing on the lower bottom; or the bark of a trapper's rifle hasten the cougar into the tall trees along the upper reaches. These, however, would be the extent of the local disturbance; for the Clearwater Valley had no transportation; so it remained a wilderness; an extremely lonesome and isolated wilderness.

And now I must withdraw a statement of a moment ago. Because, after all, the Clearwater was something more than a place with a name attached; it was the last retreat of the Kennisau Tribe of Indians—the very last retreat, of the very last of the tribe.

You, no doubt, remember the Kennisaus yourself, at least by reputation. They turned out to be a blood-thirsty lot, worse even than the Apaches, if possible.

They held to a theory that the white man was coming into the country at a rate of speed not at all commensurate with the facts, taking over the Indians' land and converting it to his own, and baser, uses—which may have been the truth.

In any event, the Kennisaus became greatly agitated over the situation. No less a personage than Old Chief Pohontihac himself, who started out with the intention of becoming, and remaining, a Christian—went to the extremity of a trip to Washington, D. C., to tell his



brother Christians the nature of his trials and tribulations.

He went in great pomp and state, arrayed in a quantity of war bonnets, beads and blankets, riding a milk-white horse with a silver mane and tail. And he returned, with his war bonnets, beads and blankets, and his milk-white horse, yet without his pomp and state. He also returned a heathen, and with a new opinion about white men.

Thereafter it transpired that, as the Western emigrant trains crept weary and slow-footed, down the Bitterroot Range into the Snake River Basin, en route to the Willamette Valley, Pohontihac and his confreres dropped casually down the river in canoes, and slew the wayfarers, without favor and apparently without fear.

This un-Christian procedure continued over a period of two or three decades, yet the expedient was without avail; the white man continued to arrive. And, as a somewhat ironic corollary, the red man continued to depart. From a large and powerful tribe, inhabiting a two-thirds of what later was to be the state of Idaho, the Kennisaus shrank to half their former size, and dropped to the lower basins of the Snake and Salmon Rivers.

It was immediately after they had occupied this, the latest of their retreats, that the O. S. L. learned that it required the lower Snake River Basin in the carrying out of its railroad plans. So the now highly indignant Kennisaus shrank again, and further reduced themselves. This time it was the valley of the Salmon. Whereupon, certain prophets of Destiny inaugurated the would-be towns of Whitebird, Leland and Lewiston, and impudent steamboat pilots began to blow loud-mouthed whistles along the banks of the Salmon. So the Kennisaus—such as now were left of them—folded their tents like the Arabs, and silently stole away up the Clearwater basin, where they sat down grimly to await the end.

Old Chief Pohontihac had long since died as the result of a broken heart—died, still a heathen. And they had buried him a heathen, amid much evidence of splendor, upon the shore of the upper Clearwater, near a point later known as Deadman's Hill, among the tombs of his contemporaries. He was left in this final resting place, together with his various war accoutrements and an abundance of food and blankets; and, because the milk-white horse refused to die, they killed it and buried it with him, so that he would not be required to walk to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

Thus at the time of this writing the Kennisaus were an all but extinct race: they had passed with the buffalo—or the buffalo had passed with them, whichever way you choose to put it. There were those who maintained that the tribe had been wholly exterminated, and others who disagreed with this contention. It was remembered that the government, not requiring the Clearwater Valley for any other purpose, had given it to the Kennisaus as a Reservation, though at a period so remote that the Department may have forgotten all about the incident.

There also had been a report that a biological expedition, out in search of the missing link, in about the year 1913, had unofficially mentioned running across signs of extinct villages along the upper Clearwater, and numerous Indian burying grounds somewhat resembling, in their general characteristics, those of the White Plains Apaches.

Moreover, the S. P. & S. surveying crew, who had run the line to the upper Clearwater coal deposits, a couple of summers before, remembered having seen, upon one or two occasions, the smoke from remote camp fires, and the occasional flash of a red and blue blanket against the background of forest green.

Beyond these meager facts, however, the subject was shrouded in mystery—a sort of halo of dead, or half-dead, memories. All that was known for sure was that the Kennisaus had made their final stand in the upper Clearwater Basin; and that now, under the urge of immediate necessity, the S. P. & S. was about to construct a railroad up the said basin—this in defiance of the laws of gravity, the ghosts of vanished tribes, the forms of those, if any, that yet remained, and all other obstacles and impediments, both seen and unseen. Because, as above suggested, the coal deposits at the head of the Clearwater, had begun to attract attention.

CHAPTER TWO

WE PITCHED our construction camp at the foot of Deadman's Hill, where the Little Chewelah enters the Clearwater, some forty miles up from its confluence with the Salmon.

Perkins, the S. P. & S. superintendent, had transferred us in a body from that unfinished stub-line running unto Burns, Oregon. The immediate job before us consisted of a roadbed, beginning at Deadman's Hill and continuing twenty miles up the left bank of the Clearwater, across the Wild Rose Prairie. The survey was already in; it was for us to follow this survey, lay the grade, run the cuts, make the fills, (there were no tunnels) and prepare the ballast ready for the ties and rails.

Our outfit comprised some three hundred construction hands, six or seven orange-peel steam shovels, for the cuts and grades, a half-hundred horse teams for the plows and scrapers, sleeping tents, repair shops, cookhouses—an ordinary railroad construction outfit. Perkins had simply handed us the job and told us to do it, so there was nothing to be said on the subject—except that it was a man-sized job, considering the time at our disposal; for we had arrived on the ground not until early in August, and we were expected to finish before the winter set in, though no one of course knew when that would be.

Weatherford, therefore, had sent Courtney up ahead of time, to establish the camp and get things in working order; we followed a couple of weeks later—Weatherford, Charley Eaglefeather and myself.

You, of course, have heard of Charley Eaglefeather. He is (or was) what they called an "educated Indian."

Not only was Charley Eaglefeather an educated Indian, but he was an educated Kennisau Indian—to state the case as it should be stated. Moreover, he had royal blood. He was the descendant of old Chief Pohontihac, grandson of Witchipa, and direct heir to the Kennisau throne, if there had been any throne left.

That is how they came to educate him, at least so they say. In any event, the Indian agent snapped him up from in front of his father's tepee, one fine morning while he was yet a beady-eyed child, shooting his toy arrows at imaginary foes, and packed him off for a five-year siege at Carlisle.

Here, a wealthy Boston spinster, touring the country in search of information—meanwhile intent upon the proverbial Indian uplift—espied him, expressed an abrupt prejudice in favor of his snappy black eyes and, descending upon him, fed him consecutively, and at her own expense, to Harvard University, the Ann Arbor Law School, and the Boston Polytechnic.

He came forth from these trials and tribulations about the most highly educated Indian one ever saw: educated—if I must tell the whole truth—in devious ways far beyond the mere sciences and the classics. For his accomplishments included—in addition to fancy waistcoats, ice-cream sodas and red ties—the fine arts of football, baseball and tennis.

Those of you who are not too young will remember in particular the brown-

skinned Aborigine, who electrified the college world by pitching Harvard to success in a fourteen-inning game, three to two, on the Princeton campus, upon that memorable afternoon in May, 1911. Well, that was Charley Eaglefeather, only he did it under his Christian name.

It was this same Eaglefeather who, during the following summer, played the all but unbeatable Quigley to a standstill on the Poughkeepsie clay courts, for the New York state championship. Upon Thanksgiving Day of that same year he ran eighty-five yards down the center of the Yale field, for a touchdown, and so saved the game. And it is still a matter of local gossip, around the lounging-rooms of the Baltusrol Golf Club, that it was an Indian—an educated Indian—who was runner-up to the redoubtable Spivvins himself, in the amateur state championship match, which went to the thirty-eighth hole before the red man finally finished, one down.

"Some Indian!" you will say.

And so he was. In fact, Eaglefeather was "runner-up" in a number of respects, including gambling debts and expense accounts, the latter of which, in time found their way to the house address of Miss Selina Pennington, of Boston.

But those old days had long since passed. Eaglefeather had resigned himself to the sterner facts of life. He was a construction engineer now, assistant to Weatherford of the S. P. & S. Moreover he was about to participate importantly in the building of a line of railroad up the desolate valley of the Clearwater, among the tombs of his ancestors, so to speak, and in a region over which he should have been king.

CHAPTER THREE

AS BEFORE mentioned, we three came down the Clearwater that first evening, together. And I shall not soon forget the manner of our coming—certainly not now, in the light of the strange and wholly inexplicable later events.

We approached the valley by the norther route, dropping down from Spokane to Lewiston, thence over the divide to the upper Clearwater, and so down the river basin, across Wild Rose Prairie.

As we entered Wild Rose Prairie, bearing southward toward the base of Deadman's Hill, we came unexpectedly upon the Indian village. It lay to eastward of the river, over against the foothills. As we issued around an abrupt bend in the trail, there it was suddenly before us, huddled in an open area among the trees on the bank of a swift-running stream. It gave the odd impression of bursting upon us.

Not that it was large enough to cause much of an explosion; rather it was its diminutive appearance that surprised us. There were not to exceed a dozen tepees, ancient as to lineage, weatherbeaten, and sagging at their centerpoles.

In the foreground there may have been a dozen Indian men, reclining at ease, smoking their long-stemmed pipes, not less inert even than their environments. Back and forth through the village moved stolid, grim-faced women, brown-skinned and wrinkled, sagging heavily at the hips as they waddled about, intent upon their household affairs.

Throughout the camp were a score or more of children at play. They were half, or wholly, nude. At our approach they leaped up, to run swiftly and without sound, like a flock of frightened quail, dodging behind the tepee flaps, vanishing into the shrubbery, dropping into the tall grass, and at once became invisible. Thereafter we could feel the urge of brown faces and beady-black eyes peering furtively at us from out these various retreats.

An Indian, huge, fat, long-haired and greasy in appearance, squatted over a smoking campfire on the creek bank, frying fish. He must have been a democratic Indian to be thus employed in the presence of his squaws.

"How, George?" said Weatherford, addressing him.

The fat Indian twisted slowly, still squatting, to look at us with great dignity over his shoulder.

"How," he said, without surprise.

"We're going to build a railroad up here," Weatherford explained. "A railroad up the Clearwater—you sabe?" Weatherford was mixing his English with Chinese.

The Indian looked at him a moment stolidly, without emotion of any sort.

"*Hyeu cultus!*" he said, succinctly. "*Halo cumtux!*" (Very bad; no understand). Then he returned to his fish-frying.

"Can't he talk English?" asked Weatherford.

"I guess he could if he *had* to," admitted Charley Eaglefeather.

"Then he just won't?"

"Well—he didn't," said Charley Eaglefeather.

We moved on down the trail, not speaking further for the moment, thinking—at least I was thinking—of the look on that old warrior's face—a look both droll and foolish, under the circumstances, squatting there, as he was, greasy and fat and squalid, over his little old smoking campfire. Yet this look, somehow, reminded me of an eagle in a cage, it was so silently dignified, so quietly defiant, so full of well-suppressed emotion. It was like the look of a king who has lost his throne, yet is still a king.

"Who are they—Kennisaus?" Weatherford asked.

"They are Kennisaus—yes," admitted Eaglefeather.

"All that is left of them?"

"It may be. . . perhaps," Charley Eaglefeather replied impersonally.

Weatherford's eyes took on a reminiscent look. . . So this was all that was left of the Kennisaus—a handful on a river bank, squatting about campfires: an extinct people, an all but vanished race, crowded to the final brink by the restless urge of that thing called "organized society"; clinging, nevertheless, tenaciously to their dead memories and the region of their last retreat. . . And here was Charley Eaglefeather, Harvard graduate, football hero—matinee idol, as it were—son of a king, heir apparent to a throne that had vanished, home at last to the land of his youth, to the region over which he should be ruler—come for the purpose of building a railroad!

"And the one frying fish over the campfire?" inquired Weatherford, turning suddenly to Eaglefeather.

"The one frying fish over the campfire," echoed Charley Eaglefeather, "is Witchipa, Chief of the Kennisau tribe!"

We passed on down the trail to the scene of our forthcoming activities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE S. P. & S. construction camp lay sprawled over a flat area, a quarter of a mile wide, along the east bank of the Clearwater. It was a quiet enough place in the day time, deserted by all save only the mess hands, or now and then a slow-footed courier. After five o'clock in the evening, however, it became a wildly cavorting mass of humanity and horses, crawling, cursing, kicking, filling the silent valley with a medley of echoing sounds, which sobbed themselves into silence somewhere toward midnight.

We were working hard, against time, Weatherford issuing orders, and Courtney driving the construction crew at top speed. We had been told to get results. It sometimes snows along the Clearwater in September, always in November, and we hoped to finish the grade before it came.

Things seemed to break unfavorably for us, however, right from the very first; we appeared to be having an un-

usual amount of bad luck. Sometimes a job does go like that—all sorts of petty interruptions; unexplainable, too.

They began to get onto Courtney's nerves early in the game.

"That's always the way with a rush order," he growled. "The more hurry, the less speed. I wish we hadn't overlooked that rigging equipment. I can't work but five of the steam shovels now, and we need all seven of 'em, to get through."

"Well, do the best you can," advised Weatherford patiently. "It does seem as if we're having a little more than our share of bother, though."

"Bother!" barked Courtney. "Well, I should say we are! The dump train went off the track three times yesterday —*only* three times, you understand? And two grade teams went over the embankment—two, in one afternoon! Can you beat it? The men aren't working very good either, somehow."

"Oh, that's all imagination," said Weatherford expansively.

"No, it isn't imagination," Courtney declared. "I don't know what it is, but somehow we're not getting results as we should— not like we usually do. I can't tell what the trouble is, though," he repeated, puckering his brows.

"Well, it's all in the day's work," said Weatherford philosophically. "We'll get through somehow, I guess; just keep on plugging."

"And, say!" Courtney turned on his heel as he started to leave. "This survey we're following calls for a ten-foot cut right through that damned Indian graveyard, over at Number Two Hill!"

"Well," said Weatherford, gazing at him impersonally from across a stack of figures upon the desk. "Run it through, then!"

"But it's a graveyard!" protested Courtney. "An Indian. . ."

"Well, they're all dead, aren't they?" inquired Weatherford, a barely perceptible twitching at the corners of his mouth.

"Yes, I know! But we're having enough trouble already, without stirring up the dead," said Courtney, with an embarrassed little laugh.

"When did you ever become so superstitious as all that?" inquired Weatherford, dryly.

"I'm not superstitious!" Courtney defended indignantly. "But—Well—the men don't—"

"If the survey calls for a cut through a graveyard," said Weatherford, measuring his words to give them greater weight, "then we go through a graveyard! We didn't make the survey; we're simply up here to follow out instructions. And we're building a railroad." Weatherford returned diligently to his figures. . . "There's gotta' be graveyards, somewhere," he added, half apologetically, dropping into the vernacular, "and there's also gotta be railroads."

Throughout the aforesaid mysterious mishaps—call them such, although they did seem to be running oddly toward the specific, as if some method, or general plan, were in operation back of them—Charley Eaglefeather displayed no emotion of any sort. You cannot get emotion out of an Indian, under ordinary circumstances. Not that it is not there—you simply can't get it out. You may look him in the face persistently for a hundred years, and yet not read his thoughts. He has them, all right; yet, such as they are, and whatever they are, they remain as safe in his charge as the secrets of the Pyramids.

Eaglefeather's work consisted in leveling the grade behind the construction crew—telling them when to break off, and when to go on.

This work he did efficiently, and without comment. He never had been much of a talker, even in his most loquacious moments, and he did not talk now. The incidents that first day at the Indian village had not since been mentioned by him, nor the tribe itself, nor his ancestors, nor the things we were doing to the family graveyard. He simply continued stoically about his task, looking at you—when he did look at you— with that poker-face gaze of his, which reminded you of a stone image, except that it was much hotter.

By the end of the fourth week of our sojourn at the foot of Deadman's Hill, the situation had gotten so badly on the nerves of the temperamental Courtney, that he took the matter up again with Weatherford.

"We've just got to do something about it," he said puckering his brows, as he always did under perplexities. "At least a hundred picks and shovels have disappeared from these diggings since we started work, forty or fifty within the past twenty-four hours."

"You hadn't told me that," breathed Weatherford.

"Well, I didn't hardly miss 'em at first—not until that big bunch went, yesterday. You know, I think it's the Indians that are doing it."

"Why; did you find some live ones when you went through their graveyard?" Weatherford smiled.

"No, but we found plenty of beads, arrowheads, and tomahawks, and a couple of tons of perfectly white bones." Courtney shivered. "There are some live ones around, though, for all that," he added. "What I'd like to know—" He turned to gaze suddenly, wide-eyed, at Weatherford, as he spoke—"What I'd like to know is, who opened those flood gates into Number Two Cut, last night!"

"Why, were they opened?" Weatherford straightened up suddenly, interested.

"Yes, they were opened—opened up wide. Three feet of water standing in the cut, this morning; had to drain it out before we could go ahead. And those gates didn't open themselves, either," Courtney added significantly.

"There may be some Bolsheviks among the crew," suggested Weatherford.

"No, I don't think so," Courtney's attitude was positive. "The crew's all right. So that isn't it. The fact remains, however, that we left the dump-train standing on the siding when we closed down last night, and this morning it was in the ditch: been run down and shunted off at the switch—lying on its side."

"Might have broken loose," suggested Weatherford thoughtfully.

"Sure, it *might!*" barked Courtney. "Those gates *might* have opened themselves, too;—but they didn't. I tell you there's something going on around here —something that's getting clear past us, without us seeing it!"

Courtney's voice held a tragic note; clearly he was both baffled and worried.

"I don't think it's the Indians, though," said Weatherford.

"Well, who is it, then?" Courtney demanded, helplessly. "Somebody's doing it; it's just got to be Indians, of some sort."

"I'm sure I don't know who it is," said Weatherford, with a worried stare. "Yet it's a situation that'll have to be looked into."

CHAPTER FIVE

NOW it is a fact that we had seen no Indians since the first day of our arrival. We had observed, it is true. their horses—they had a large number of horses, two or three hundred, I should think—grazing, always at a great distance out over Wild Rose Prairie.

Also, we had noticed occasional plumes of smoke rising against the blue sky from remote campfires, and heard, sometimes, faint though garish Indian sounds—the weird chant of the harvest dance, the monotonous beating of tom-toms.

Yet these sights and sounds were always distant—far away, as if they were but memories. In truth, they had from the first seemed more like memories than realities—memories of a once vast and

ruthless, but now lost or depleted, ancestry. In a sense the thing was symbolic.

The weather was of that wonderful type we sometimes dream about, which comes so clear and still in September across the western plateaus. The earth lay silent, motionless—decked in an endless multitude of autumn colors. Above it the sun beat down, white-hot and brilliant, like a spotlight on a painted picture. The very universe seemed holding its breath, as if in a tense attitude of listening.

Out of this silence arose the endless coughing of the steam shovels, the sudden shriek of the donkey whistle, the rattling bump of couplings, the burst of escaping steam, the hoarse shouts of men, echoing mile upon mile up and down the valley, as the S. P. & S. construction crew drove headlong and with feverish haste, at its work on the Clearwater line.

Charley Eaglefeather, in his general demeanor, had not particularly changed. He pursued his task as before—stoically and without comment.

Yet, observing him more closely, I felt sure I could discern a subterranean difference. There seemed to be a deeper—in a certain respect, a wilder—look in his eyes. At times it reminded me of the look on the face of Chief Witchipa as he squatted there that morning beside his campfire, gazing at us over his shoulder: the suppressed look of an eagle in a cage, or of a king who has lost his throne, yet is still a king.

We had finished the cut at Number Two Hill; we were beyond the Indian burying ground now. Not only had we bisected this region with a forty-foot railway cut, but in our haste, and absence of alternative, we had desecrated the surrounding area, grooving and scalloping the earth's surface, scattering, with plow and scraper, the little stone pyramids that marked the final resting place of warrior and chieftain, for a hundred yards or so on either side.

Yet throughout this unhallowed transaction Charley Eaglefeather spoke no word, vouchsafed no sign of protest. He simply and painstakingly leveled up the grade behind the construction crew, and continued as before, speechless.

This statement, however, could not equally apply to the construction gang. The fact that they sensed some abnormal condition began to play upon their imaginations. There must have been ancestor-worshippers among the S. P. & S. crew, or heathen of some sort. In any event, they raised a considerable hue and cry over the situation, built drama out of it, even hyperbole; raked over the dead past hundred years of Kennisau history, assembled and digested it—or failed to digest it, and so had mental dyspepsia.

As for the rest of us, we proceeded with our work as best we could, under the prevailing handicaps. Courtney set a night watchman over the flood gates at Number Two Cut, with orders to keep an eye on the construction train. We had laid a temporary wire up the Clearwater to the N. P. main line, connecting the world at large by 'phone; Weatherford, therefore, called up Spokane, ordering more picks and shovels; and that was the end of the pick and shovel incident.

CHAPTER SIX

IT WAS, I believe, the second night after Courtney had placed the watchman at Number Two Cut, that the fellow reported.

He did it abruptly; he all but broke down the door getting into the improvised office. Courtney and I were there at the time, figuring over the next day's yardage. The fellow seemed greatly exorcised.

"There's a bunch of Indians over at Cut Number Two," he babbled. "Actin' awful queer. Two or three hundred of 'em. Better come along, quick!"

Courtney and I, of course, hurried over to investigate.

Sure enough, there they were. In number they could not have exceeded a dozen. It was close to midnight. The moon was beyond its first quarter; it hung low against the western horizon, casting a pallid, yellow light across the enshrouded valley.

Through this light we saw them dimly—more as if they were shadows, and not realities. They were in full battle regalia. Above their heads in the saffron glow loomed their huge war bonnets. The many-colored blankets, swathed tightly about their forms, flapped in the night wind. Their faces, as they turned them now and then toward the moon, appeared streaked and blotched with the horrid masks of war paint.

We drew up close beside the string of flats, and stood there watching them silently. Their actions seemed more than curious; they went stooping along the ground, fumbling about, moving here and there across the desecrated area, to eastward of Number Two Cut.

"They're putting back the stones!" Courtney gasped, with a sudden intake of breath—"rearranging the stones to mark the desecrated graves. . . God!" he burst forth abruptly, clutching me by the arm. "See those things they've got! Look, man, they're bows and arrows!—They're not guns, they're *bows and arrows!* Indians don't use bows and arrows, nowadays!"

"Let go my arm," I growled, shaking him off. . .

The things they carried *were* bows and arrows. They wore them looped across their shoulders, in a manner to stand up straight, as they went stooping about, smoothing out the corrugated earth, picking up stones and rearranging them in little round heaps. They did it all silently, making no sound of any sort, simply stooping about, there in the night, arranging little heaps of stones. There was something terribly pathetic about it.

And then, a sudden puff of night wind crossed the prairie, wailing dismally through the tall grass as it went, and I stood rubbing my eyes, staring foolishly. For they had vanished—vanished as they came, without a word or sound, leaving the night suddenly empty!

"Where did they go?" I heard myself asking, idiotically.

And then my blood seemed suddenly changed to water, at the pressure of a hand upon my shoulder. I turned to confront Weatherford; he had come up behind us as we stood watching.

"Did you see them?" I whispered.

He nodded his head.

"I saw them disappear," he said, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"They were fixing up the graves," I explained weakly, and kept hold of Weatherford's arm.

"Yes," he said, with an odd quirk in his speech. "It's a shame, isn't it? . . . We've got to build our railroad, though," he went on in a grimmer voice, "even if we do have to. . ." He tossed his hands and did not finish the sentence. "In the interest of commerce!" he added presently, with a droll look. "Poor fellows! They never had a single chance, against the white man."

"Did you see their bows and arrows?" urged Courtney, with a hysterical giggle. "A little out of date—eh?" and he laughed again—a hollow laugh that echoed there in the night. "Only an Indian knows how to disappear, like that!" he added, as if to reassure himself.

It must have been about five o'clock in the morning—the same morning—that the camp cook came knocking at my door, awakening me out of a not too refreshing sleep. The camp cook arises before daybreak, of course; he came, now, to report: everyone appeared to be reporting, nowadays; it semed to be the fashion.

The nature of the cook's report was that, as he went out to the wood-rick for kindling to build the fires—at about three-thirty o'clock in the morning—he noticed a horseman, a solitary horseman, riding back and forth along the ridge over by Cut Number Two.

It was still very dark; yet he could distinctly see him, so he claimed. The man was an Indian. He was gaudily attired in beads and blanket, paint and war bonnet. He was a tall, large Indian. He sat very straight and dignified upon his horse, like—well, something like a chief. He carried bow and arrows, and a war axe. He wasn't doing anything, though, in particular—just riding back and forth among the graves, as if he were on an inspection tour.

As for the horse—the cook was most positive about the horse; it was a milk-white horse, with a silver mane and tail. He even saw the dew glistening on its silver mane and tail, saw it throw up its head and whinny once, as if it were lost and looking for its mates. They weren't doing any damage, though—not making a sound of any sort—just moving back and forth like shadows, there in the dark, among the graves. They seemed to have risen up suddenly out of Cut Number Two, he said; and they later rode back into Cut Number Two, and so disappeared. When he looked up again they were gone.

"I thought I ought to come and tell you, sir," he said. "They weren't very plain, of coure, not much plainer than shadows. And yet. . ."

He continued to hang on his heel, there at my doorway, obsessed with a surfeit of words, as if he wished to remain forever talking.

"'I thought I ought to come and tell you, sir," he repeated.

"Go on and get about your breakfast," I ordered him, roughly; "this is a railroad construction camp, not a kindergarten; the thing we need here is food!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

WE HAD a yet more definite experience than this, however, with the chimerical white horse and its silver mane and tail.

This time it was the night-watchman himself. We three—Weatherford, Courtney and I— were sitting in the little office, discussing the next day's work. It was late at night—eleven-thirty, at least.

Suddenly we heard a fusillade of rifle shots, over by Cut Number Two. We sprang up and rushed pell mell through the doorway, into the night, and across the interval in the direction of the sounds.

We found the watchman leaning weakly against a drive-wheel of the donkey engine fumbling with his rifle in an effort to reload it.

"What went with them?" he gasped, hysterically, as we came up and, dropping his gun, he caught Weatherford by the sleeve.

"What went with what?" asked Weatherford, thrusting him loose.

"They rose up out of Cut Number Two," he said, his teeth chattering, "and started across the old burying ground, straight toward me. I called out to them to halt. But they didn't do it. Then I opened fire on them—began to shoot, as fast as I could. But somehow I couldn't hit them, at all. So they came straight on, slow and dignified as fate, not making a sound—straight at me, till I could see the whites of their eyes, and hear them breathing. God! I simply couldn't miss, at thirty yards!

"Yet, I did miss!" he gasped, in a shivering whisper, "I emptied my repeater straight into them, at thirty yards, and never turned a hair! And then I ran—as fast as I could: I came here! Where are they, now?"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Weatherford, shaking him savagely.

"An Indian!" he whispered. "An Indian chief, all in war paint and blankets; riding a milk-white horse, with a silver mane and tail! Where did they go?" The man trembled all over as he talked; his face was a white as death.

"They didn't go anywhere!" said Weatherford, angrily. "Because they weren't here. You go to the camp doctor and have him give you a good stiff drink of brandy."

"Hell!" swore Courtney, twisting his hands together. "Of course, they weren't here. Of course, there wasn't any—"

There came a sudden whistling in our ears; an object flashed hot and hissing past our heads, and stuck quivering in the framework of the donkey. I reached a trembling hand and pulled it out. It was an Indian arrow, crowned with a head of flint.

Weatherford turned toward Courtney with a gesture of precision:

"You'd better 'phone Fort Hardie, tomorrow morning," he announced, "and tell them to send over the cavalry, and clean these Indians out. We've just got to finish this railroad," he added, parenthetically. "And as for the rest"—he turned to me abruptly—"You go out, tomorrow morning, and look over their herd—and see if there's a milk-white horse there, with a silver mane and tail."

I went, as ordered; but I found no milk-white horse with a silver mane and tail.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE SAW them again the next night, just after the sun had dropped below the western horizon, leaving the valley in shadows.

We had gone into a conference, Weatherford, Courtney and myself, over the question of veering the survey up beyond Camloops Creek, in an effort to reduce the grade. We three simply came together beside the lumber heap in front of the company office, and began to talk. Eaglefeather was coming out of the bunk-house at the time. Since the question in a measure involved his part of the work, Weatherford invited him to join us.

I gave the Indian a second, keener, look as he came walking silently, tall and dignified into our midst. And I saw at once that he had changed for the worse. His usually smooth hair was disheveled. His face was pinched and set. There was a drawn look about the corners of his tightly-closed mouth, and a wild, though wholly inscrutable, expression in his eyes. With all the force at his command he appeared to be struggling against some tense emotion which seemed continually on the verge of overcoming him. His attitude reflected tragedy.

It was but natural that we soon switched from the subject of grades and crossings, to that other subject which lay furtively in the back of each of our minds; because by now the situation had passed far beyond the scope of trivialities. It had become a real problem.

"There are only a dozen of them Indians, at the most," said Weatherford, reassuringly. "They'll not make us any *real* bother."

"Real bother!" snorted Courtney. "I sure hope it don't get any worse than it is already. What do you make of that white horse incident last night?"

"Oh, they've got a white horse hid around, somewhere," said Weatherford, expansively. "That night watchman was just excited; that's how he came to miss them. And it's a good thing that he did."

"The bunch of grave diggers was back again last night," said Courtney, ominously, "heaping up little piles of stones, as before. The cook saw them."

"Well, it's too darned bad," commented Weatherford. "What made those fool surveyors run the line where they did, anyhow? Any idiot should have

known better than that. You can't blame the Indians for being mad. . . So they were back again last night, were they?"

"That's what the cook says. He saw them." Courtney stood staring at Weatherford. "The cook saw them. Yet the night-watchman couldn't see them at all," he added. "The two of them stood shoulder to shoulder, looking; and the cook could see them, and the night-watchman couldn't." Courtney laughed shrilly. "What d'y' think of that?"

Weatherford gazed at him steadily for a moment.

"I think we had better change the night-watchman," he said quietly.

But Courtney was not so easily diverted.

"Strange, the cook could see 'em and the watchman couldn't," he mused, abstractedly. "Yet they were there! Snooping around among the graves, like their feelings had been hurt, and they hadn't power to mention it. Say! Do they ever come back like that, I wonder? I remember once. . ."

But Weatherford cut him off sharply.

"Pshaw, now!" he said disgustedly. "That's a foolish line of talk for a business man. They've all been dead a hundred years. . . Haven't they?" he added; and he gazed about at us slowly, impersonally, as if he expected an answer to his question.

Courtney turned suddenly to Eaglefeather.

"What do *you* think about it, Charley?" he asked, with a little twisted grin.

Eaglefeather stared at him for a moment intently, without speaking; then his gaze wandered off into the gathering darkness.

"I don't know whether they're dead or not," he said. "But I don't believe they are!"

"Oh, pshaw!" Weatherford laughed his provoked laugh again. "That's all foolishness, Eaglefeather. Get the idea out of your mind. It's that bunch of Indians over by Lost Creek—juse them, and nothing more."

"I guess you're right," argued Courtney. "I ought to know! The darned fools kept banging around on their tom-toms, last night, and doing their war chants, over by Deadman's Hill, till I couldn't sleep a wink. Getting onto my nerves, too, I guess."

"The Kennisaus were not beating tom-toms last night," said Charley Eaglefeather. "Nor doing any war chants, either."

"You mean to tell me they weren't beating tom-toms from ten o'clock till midnight, over by Deadman's Hill?" Courtney's face had taken on a look of positive alarm.

"They were not," said Eaglefeather, quietly. "I was with them until after midnight myself, at their camp in the Elk Creek Basin, many miles from the place you mention."

"Then who was it beating tom-toms, I'd like to know?" Courtney almost shrieked. "What in the—"

He paused with a sudden intake of breath, his face frozen in a look of utter stupefaction.

"There they are, now!" he whispered tensely, and pointed toward the distant top of Deadman's Hill.

The sun had slipped behind the western rim; the valley beneath the ridges lay swathed in the gathering shadows. Yet the top of Deadman's Hill, a half mile distant, still caught the last rays of upper light.

And there, among the scattering pines, upon the abrupt shoulder of the precipice, stood the milk-white horse and its rider, silent and erect like a statue of William II. at Coblenz; while behind this apparition ranged a group of horsemen, blanketed, and with war accoutrements, standing at attention.

For a moment they remained thus, as if frozen into their background of scenery, standing out clear and distinct under the last rays of the setting sun:—a chief and his warriors, ready to move forward—as if a spotlight had been turned suddenly upon the final phase of a tableau, out of history.

Then the light waned, faded, disappeared entirely, leaving the whole earth wrapped in deeper opaque shadows. And the apparition was gone—vanished with the light.

It was the voice of Eaglefeather that aroused us from our stupefaction. He had uncovered, suddenly, and he stood thus, facing the top of Deadman's Hill. Across his darkly expressive features there had come the wrapt look of a zealot; his eyes burned with an unnatural fire.

"Pohontihac!" he whispered, reverently. "Pohontihac! The Chief has returned!"

"Silence, Eaglefeather!" cried Weatherford, shaking him by the shoulder. "Cut out that sorcery, man! Nobody has returned, there's nothing unnatural. . ."

But the Indian gave no heed to this command; for Eaglefeather had begun to talk, at last.

"They have returned," he echoed in a hollow voice, twisting his hands together. "The Kennisaus have come back to claim their ravished lands. This is the final move. There's trouble on the wind, tonight."

"Calm yourself, Eaglefeather!" Weatherford's voice took on a pleading note. "It's only the Kennisaus, I tell you—the remnant of the tribe. They haven't come back. They haven't. . ."

"The north wind blows," the Indian ran on in a sing-song voice, rocking himself gently back and forth with his chant—"The north wind blows. The cicadas have ceased to call. The crows fly in long lines to the mountain tops: There's a ring around the moon, tonight!"

The look on Weatherford's face had changed suddenly to one of alarm.

"Man, you're beside yourself!" he begged. "Don't carry on so—don't do it, I say! You know there's nothing unnatural about it. You know. . ."

But the Indian had passed beyond the pale of argument; he was back again in the paleolithic age; the superstitions of a thousand years had returned upon him, multiplied.

"The gods of the Kennisaus are angry tonight," he ran on, swaying himself back and forth rhythmically, in a weird half-dance, tossing his arms above his head. "Their souls are wracked with sorrow—they hear the sounds of much weeping. The spirits of the dead make medicine. The north wind will rage for a sign; the forests will moan for the sorrows of those who weep. The spirit of the great Pohontihac comes for revenge. Beware of the north wind! Death rides through the heavens tonight. . ."

Thus he raged on in his hideous incantation, eyes wide and staring, head erect, shoulders squared, rocking himself luridly back and forth, the look of a seer upon his tense and agitated face.

We stood staring at him, amazed and speechless, there in the gathering night. No one within our little group held the power of further utterance. For the cycle of life stood inert; the very earth itself loomed forth, devoid of perspective. The groove of time seemed suddenly to have slipped back and left him once more a savage, among his savage ancestors. For Charley Eaglefeather, abruptly and without warning, had returned to Idolatry.

CHAPTER NINE

THE storm broke about ten o'clock at night—a high, dry wind blowing out of a half-clear northern sky, under a fitful moon.

It set the tall grass singing like Aeolian harps, moaned through the scattering clumps of buckbrush, and roared in the tops of the cottonwoods

over back of the cook-house. Its voice stirred the S. P. & S. construction camp to an activity far beyond its normal, filling the night with the thumping of many hoofs, the sound of hurrying feet, and the loudly issued call of orders.

My badly-shaken nerves denied me sleep. So I walked about the construction camp—in and out among the improvised buildings, up and down along the different spur tracks, back and forth across the open intervals—finally, after the lapse of an hour or so, through a tiny universe which slept again, though more or less fitfully.

The wind raged on, rising ever in intensity. Yet the night was not wholly opaque. Across the intervals the camp buildings peered like gray ghosts out of the darkness. Through the pale saffron glow I could see the dim outline of Deadman's Hill looming like a shadow across the northern sky. Overhead the clouds, snow white or inky-black, with pink and silver edges, fled on and on across the face of a porcelain moon.

The night seemed filled with an extra dread, the air surcharged with currents of electricity. The thing—whatever it might turn out to be—was not yet at an end. Of this I felt quite sure. Perhaps it was only beginning—who could say? The slumbering camp slept on; only the night-watchmen were about, moving like wraiths along their various beats. And I, whose nerves denied me sleep, kept additional watch and ward, listening, waiting intensely, senses keyed to the breaking point, against that thing which should—at least which might—next transpire.

THEY appeared to be coming from the north—riding with the wind and the night, as it were, down across Wild Rose Prairie.

I could hear the vague though well-defined rumble of significant sound, rising and receding, and rising again, like the roaring of a storm on a distant mountain side. No physical thing made itself manifest, as yet—no object was visible to the human eyes; yet I keenly felt the approach of this nameless menace.

Filled with a sudden wish to rise above my environment, and so attain a point of greater safety, I climbed upon the lumber heap in front of the company office, and there stood, buffeted by the high wind, peering northward, wide-eyed, into the night.

The sounds had grown louder, now, increased to a rattling roll—the steady, persistent roll of hundreds of horses' hoofs, hard-driven, beating upon the grass-grown surface of Wild Rose Prairie.

They were bearing down upon us—coming in the direction of the construction camp. Presently a dim outline became visible, more like the moving shadow of a cloud, spread thin and stringlike across the flat surface of prairie, vague yet forever moving, working up and down, traveling continually toward us through the saffron night, like the wind passing over a field of wheat.

The sleeping construction camp heard the increasing urge of sound, and stirred again into life. Lights winked on suddenly in the cook-house and the sleeping quarters; door slammed, voices called shrilly across the darkness. The S. P. & S. had arisen once more to action. Beyond all other sounds I could hear the squealing of the frightened horses in the company corrals, the scamper of feet, the sharp thud of hoofs against the sides of the enclosure; and, rising thinly out of the aggregate rush of noise, the voice of Weatherford at the telephone in the little office back of me, calling persistently for Fort Hardie, and the cavalry.

A hand grasped me tensely by the sleeve, and I turned. It was Courtney; he had climbed upon the lumber heap beside me; he stood now, white-faced and trembling at my elbow.

"A stampede!" he whispered. "They have sprung a stampede—turned their range horses loose upon us!"

But it was not a stampede. For those horses—deployed, as they were, in a thin skirmish line of cavalry across Wild Rose Prairie, running low and with muzzles tense and outstretched—they had riders! Riders, in blankets, paint and war bonnets, who sat their steeds erect and full of dignity. They were led by a figure on a milk-white horse with a silver mane and tail.

Thus they came on swiftly toward us. Yet they gave forth no sound—made no undue motion; they simply drove straight ahead, silently, inexorably, like spectres riding down the night.

"See how still they are!" gasped Courtney suddenly, clutching me by the arm. "As if they were dumb!—not able to make a noise of any sort!"

I shook his hand free from my sleeve.

"Why shouldn't they be still?" I hissed back at him foolishly. "There's nothing to make a noise about."

"Shadows of the dead past!" I heard Courtney breathe with a half sob, his voice trailing off into a whisper.

Up along the S. P. & S. right of way they came, through Cut Number Two, over the half-finished grades, across the desecrated burying grounds, with an endless roaring of hoofs, like the rush of a rising gale. The night wind rattled the dry quills of their war bonnets, streamed through their black, disheveled hair, whipping their blankets out straight like streamers behind them, as they came along. Yet they gave forth no human sign nor sound: they simply rode circumspectly on through the night.

"God! They can't move!" Courtney gasped. "See, they can't move—they can't turn their heads!"

The frenzy of this half-demented man seemed to unseat my reason, obsess my mind, so that I heard what he heard, saw only what he saw. Thus I beheld this strange aggregation of shapes, fossilized in this their supernatural calm, come swiftly on, as if pulled by unseen hands across the darkness. Their chins were up, their shoulders held erect; each right arm, reaching high and defiant, clutched aloft a bow and a sheaf of arrows. Yet no emotion stirred the muscles of their bodies, no feature changed upon those paint-smeared faces. They simply sat like images of bronze, their eyes, wide and unblinking, gazed fixedly ahead, as if frozen in their sockets.

"Blind!" Courtney whispered, half hysterically. "Totally blind! Oh, pitiful, pitiful!"

Thus for a brief instant they flashed across our view. In that instant the earth spun dizzily around, losing all form and focus. For they rode—or seemed to ride—straight through the construction train, asleep upon the siding; through the seven steam shovels; through the cook-house, and the hundred tents of the sleeping quarters; through the little office itself, where Weatherford still sat calling frantically for the cavalry—through, and on—and left things standing as before!

The S. P. & S. construction camp joined in the brief commotion, with a slamming and banging of doors, the call of frantic voices from out the sleeping quarters. Yet these, with the steady beating of hoofs, were the only sounds.

Our own horses, catching the swift contagion, screaming and kicking, leaped against the corral gates and, riding them down, flowed out upon the prairie to join the wild night orgy.

So they passed, thundering away southward down the Clearwater Basin. The noise diminished, grew less and less, coming vaguely and yet more vaguely across the growing distance, sank finally to a low grumble on the night wind, and so disappeared. Once more the S. P. & S. construction camp lay wrapped in its garment of silence and repose.

Presently, out of this silence, there arose the wailing note of a lone coyote,

howling to the moon, from the shoulder of Deadman's Hill.

CHAPTER TEN

THE cavalry arrived next morning at daybreak, in charge of young Captain Farnsworth, spick and span and "spiffy;" not far removed, mentally, from West Point, and showing it by his actions. Weatherford gave him the details.

Yes; he would round up the darned Siwashes—sure, he would. In about ten seconds, too.

He proceeded to do so, though not in ten seconds. At two o'clock in the afternoon he called past the camp to report.

"There weren't any Indians, to speak of, after all," he smiled, "less than a dozen bucks, all told—same number of squaws, thirty or forty naked children, and about a hundred dogs.

"But, say!" he explained, to Weatherford. "Those Indians haven't been doing anything. They're perfectly harmless—quiet as mice; haven't made a move in twenty years—so Alderson says. We found 'em over back of Deadman's Hill, cooking their breakfast—frying fish over a little old smoky campfire, too lazy even to stand up. I'll run 'em over to the Fort for a couple of days' discipline, however," he added, "and then turn 'em loose again. You don't need to worry about 'em, though; they're perfectly harmless."

"Don't you ever think it!" said Weatherford grimly. "They pulled a perfectly good stampede on us, last night—run off all our horses: took us till half an hour ago to get 'em back. By the way," he added, looking suddenly at the officer, "You didn't happen to see anything of Charley Eaglefeather, did you? He's an educated Indian—one of the S. P. & S. crew. He's clean gone, and we don't have an idea where to find him."

The Captain hadn't seen Charley Eaglefeather, however. Neither did the S. P. & S. crew ever see him again. For he had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, leaving no trail behind.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WELL, the storm brought the snow upon its heels within the next twenty-four hours.

Forty-eight hours later came a long-distance telephone from Perkins, ordering us down to the Grant's Pass District, in Southern Oregon, where it doesn't snow in September, nor in October either, for the matter of that. The next spring the war came; and I forgot all about how to build railroads, and didn't get back for two years.

They finished the Clearwater stub-line, though, in the meanwhile. I know; I rode over it one day last week. That's how I came to tell you this story. I was en route to the new coal fields. I'm working for the Government, now, and the Department figured this new Clearwater coal might be good enough for the Navy. So they sent me up to investigate.

I got off the train at Waverly, a place once better known as Deadman's Hill. Call it sentiment if you like, I don't object. I simply wanted to look the place over again.

The smoke of an Indian village attracted my attention, over against the foothills on the bank of the Little Chewelah. So I went in that direction.

An Indian, fat and squalid and greasy was squatting over a little smoky campfire at the creek's edge, frying fish.

"How, George?" I said.

"How," he replied.

And then, still squatting, he twisted to look at me over his shoulder.

"Why! Charley Eaglefeather!" I gasped, all but collapsing in my amazement. "Of all things! How on earth did you get here?"

Still squatting there, he gazed at me for a moment over his shoulder, silently, inscrutably, yet with great dignity, like an eagle in a cage; or like a king that has lost his throne, yet is still a king.

"Hieu Clatawah!" he said, finally, *"Halo Cumtux!"*

Then he returned again to his fish-frying.

Sisters Prefer Death to Charity

WITH their ancestral home heavily mortgaged, and every article of furniture sold bit by bit to buy food, two sisters, Hilda and Monna Coe, 40 and 37 years old respectively, of Carthage, Mo., chose death by starvation in preference to the charity proffered by well-meaning neighbors. For weeks, their only sustenance was the roots and berries which they gathered along the roadside. When authorities visited them to inquire after their condition, the sisters, with dignity, assured the officers that they were all right and desired to be let alone.

Several nights later, the neighbors were horrified to hear screams and groans issuing from the rambling old structure. Officers hastened to the house, and in response to their summons, Monna dragged herself to the door and, half-delirious, begged them to leave. It was necessary for a doctor to give her a hypodermic injection to still her eerie cries. Not an article of furniture remained in the entire house, and the body of Hilda was found lying on a sheet in the corner. Her wasted skeleton testified to the cause of death, which had occurred twenty-four hours previous as decomposition had already begun. Monna was taken to the county hospital, with little hope for her recovery.

Female Buddha Slain

EFFORTS to eject "reds" from Mongolia has cost the life of the "Female Buddha," wife of 'the "Living Buddha," and for several years a prominent figure in the conspiracy of Mongolian princes and chieftains against soviet forces, according to an official dispatch received in Peking recently from Urga, Mongolia.

Both Buddhas, members of the Khalkha tribes of outer Mongolia, have been a source of constant torment to the "reds" of late, having succeeded in uncovering several plots by which the soviet forces have hoped to overrun Mongolia. Of the two the "Female Buddha," has been the most active.

First, cherishing dreams of Mongolian independence, she sought the help of Russian white guard forces, which resulted in the entry into Urga at the head of "white" forces of "Mad Baron" Ungern, which gave the soviets an excuse for the occupation of Mongolia.

As a result of the occupation both Buddhas were imprisoned in their Urga Palace, the "Female," dying shortly after from poison which it is believed was administered to her by court officials bribed by soviet officials.

Here Are the Last Thrilling Chapters of

SUNFIRE*

By FRANCIS STEVENS

A RESUME OF THE EARLY CHAPTERS

FIVE young Americans, in quest of adventure, land upon upon the strange island of Tata Quarahy, and there behold, in the hollow heart of an ancient pyramid, a hideous monster, somewhat like a gigantic centipede, dancing to the music of Pan's pipe, played by a beautiful woman. Following a series of harrowing adventures in the pyramid, during which they discover a mammoth diamond of incalculable value, the adventurers are trapped in a tomb, where, it seems, they are to be burned alive as a sacrifice to the native deity. Death by starvation, however, instead of this horrible fate, begins to threaten them, when their long waiting at last ends. Their keeper comes to them.

THE STORY CONTINUES FROM THIS POINT

CHAPTER NINE

AN UNWELCOME INVITATION

FOR comfort, there was little choice between sitting, lying down or standing on the cold, damp stones of their cramped quarters.

The heavy bronze shackles rasped the skin from their ankles in any position, and aching bones drove them to a continual uneasy shifting. But it so happened that Sigsbee was the only man on his feet when the keeper arrived.

There had been no warning sound of approach. The first notice the four other captives received was young Sigsbee's voice, breathing a husky word that brought them all clanking up in haste to their windows.

Into that single word Sigsbee had poured a reproach for trust betrayed, a shocked amazement that the betrayer should shamelessly reappear, a wholly youthful satisfaction in being able to address that expressive *"You!"* to the right person, which told them instantly that their "Blessed Damozel" of yestere'en was again with them.

The triangular openings were not large enough to permit the passage of a prisoner's head. Much as they would have liked to crane their necks for a first-hand view, they must rely on Sigsbee's report. A volley of harsh questions exploded down the line. Sigsbee's voice rose against them.

"Stop that, you fellows! You're frightening her. There—I told you. She's crying again. Now she'll go away. No, it's all right. She's passing my things through the window. *Brave* little girl! Now listen, fellows. I don't care what you think, this girl is not responsible for what happened."

"Oh, Lawdy!" groaned the deepest of the harsh voices. "He's hooked again! Wake up, Sig. With her own fair hands she poured the k.o. drops. She'll never weep her way into *my* heart again. Is any one with her?"

"No, she's alone. Listen, Waring. She's coming your way. If you aren't decently civil to her, I give you fair warning I'll—"

"You'll what? Butt your head against the wall? Oh, there you are, Susan!"

The harshest voice had lowered to a base growl, suggestive of the jaguar which had once worn Waring's costume. Into his range of vision, staggering beneath the weight of a heavy reed basket, had come their fair betrayer.

There was justification for almost any degree of bitterness. Young Sigsbee's reversal of judgment appeared mere weakness. And yet, either because he feared to anger or frighten away the source of supplies, or for some other reason, the correspondent's righteous wrath received no further expression just then. He was heard to mutter something about "more damn mangos," a less depreciative, "Bananas—better than nothing!" and a final, "Water at last, thank God!"—and then the slender food-bringer was dragging her basket along to the next cell.

At close range the girl could be seen only as she reached each captive's door. A little later, however, her task finished, the empty basket deserted, she drifted out into the general range of vision.

At the opening of that lane, which faced Tellifer's person, she paused. Silhouetted against the pale glow beyond, they saw her stand an instant, head bent, shoulders drooping, silent as always, by mere attitude suggesting a boundless, pitiful dejection. Then she moved slowly away.

Three minutes more, and Tellifer emerged from that unnatural speechlessness he had preserved all afternoon.

"She is gazing into the pit," he informed solemnly. "Now she has sunk to her knees beside one of the columns. She is weeping again, and she has much to mourn for! The human fiends whose servant she is are the inheritors of a truly monstrous crime."

"Let her weep!" The immediate presence removed, Waring's vindictiveness had revived. "Decoy. That's all Susan is. And we aren't the first. Not by a damn sight! Those boats—the airplane. Nothing but fruit and water for starving men. Monstrous crimes is right, TNT!"

The esthete sighed deeply. "The crimes to which you refer are trivial beside the far more shocking one which I am certain has been accomplished in this place. But no more of it. The subject is too dreadful. I am not a practical man, but has it struck none of you as strange that except for the one old woman whom Waring caught a glimpse of, we have as yet seen only the girl?"

**The first half of this story appeared in the July-August WEIRD TALES. A copy will be mailed by the publishers for twenty-five cents.*

"Awake at last, hm? Been discussing nothing else all day."

"Is that true, Alcot? I was inattentive, perhaps. My mind was upon—But let me forget that. During the discussion was any probable explanation reached?"

"No, Mr. Tellifer," Otway informed him gravely. "No probable explanation was reached. It is my own conviction, indeed, that no probable explanation ever will be reached. I don't say that none of us will survive to learn the true facts. Life and hope, remember; life and hope! But when those facts are ascertained, they will not be probable. Possible, perhaps, but decidedly—not—probable! The situation simply doesn't admit of it. Oh, Waring! How about that story?"

"Sunday supplement stuff," disparaged the correspondent. "No magazine would dare touch it. Wonder how long we'll be left here? Safe for tonight, anyway. Fashionable beggars! All ceremonies at high noon. What news of Susan? Still weeping?"

His last question, addressed to Tellifer, was answered from another source. Out in the silent central court a sound had begun. As when, ascending the outer stairway, that same sound had first reached their ears, every one of the five posed through a long minute, breathless and listening.

Their reason for attention, however, had changed. Then it had been wonder and a devouring curiosity as to the source of that quaint, monotonous, double-fluted melody. Now they had no curiosity about it. They knew exactly what instrument was being played, who was playing it, and for what astonishing purpose. And every man of them was suddenly thankful that his cell possessed a thick, serviceable, bronze door, tightly closed, and with only one small window.

"Have to hand it to Susan!" gasped Waring at last. "Fido's coming out. I can see him. She afraid? Not little blue-eyes! Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy! How much more of him is there?"

"The—ah—anterior mile or so of Fido has strayed over to where I also can enjoy a view," Otway asserted. "They took away my shell-rims, but I can make out that the cephalite, or head-shield, is quite well-developed. About the size of a flour-barrel, I should say. And the toxicognaths, or poison-fangs— Oh, ye gods! No, it's all right. For an instant I believed Fido was coming down my alley to call. But it was merely a thousand-legged pirouette. This dancing rite probably takes place every evening and is entirely separate from the noonday sacrifice. It is likely, also, that we are being saved up, as it were, for some special day or occasion. There being no one present tonight save the priestess, we need have no immediate fears."

"Speak for yourself!" Waring's heavy voice broke on the words. "She's bringing it—*she's bringing that thing down my alley!*"

The monotonous melody of the Pan's pipes had indeed approached much nearer. A moment more, and not only Waring, but all the prisoners were given evidence that the pair of dancers were not content to exercise their art at a distance from their audience.

Between the cells and the artificial jungle was a space perhaps ten feet broad. For *Scolopendra Horribilis* to have elaborated his curious, coiling patterns on that cramped stage would have been impossible. Like a true artist, he did not even attempt it. When the girl swayed gracefully into view, turned to the narrow space and passed lightly along it, still piping, the sacred monster—or a portion of him—merely followed.

As she crossed each successive band of light at the clear lanes, those in the cells caught glimpses of her awful attendant.

The head, with enormous, blind-looking yellow eyes, gaping mandibles and huge poison-fangs, hovered close above the starry circlet of gems in the girl's red-gold hair. The talons of the plated length below seemed on the point of closing around her slender shoulders. Yet the girl cast not so much as a glance upward or back. In turning at the end, she took no care to avoid colliding with the frightful Death that followed.

Death for its part, however, respectfully drew aside, made a talon-fringed running loop of itself, and continued to follow. Through alternate light and shadow the girl passed back until she again reached the correspondent's prison-cell.

There the other four could no longer see her. In returning, she had moved close to the cell-rank. There followed a *clang*, as of a heavy bolt thrown back. A hoarse, wordless ejaculation. Another *clang*, suggesting metal tossed down on a stone floor. Then the girl had stepped into view again, still playing but holding the pipes to her lips with one hand. With the other she was seen to beckon gracefully.

"Boys," came the correspondent's desperate voice, "good-bye! That infernal little Jezebel! She has opened my door! She has given me the key to these damn shackles! She's inviting me to come out! By God, I won't go out! There's that shaft behind the cell. I'll jump! Wait till I get these irons off."

A rasping sound, a crude key turning in a clumsy lock, a rattle of chains hastily discarded.

"Waring!" From the next cell Otway spoke with quiet, restraining force. "Don't jump! Do whatever she wishes. The sacrifice is to the sun, remember. If she had wanted that monster to destroy us tonight, why should she have bothered to bring us food? This is part of some preliminary ceremony. And your limbs will be free. Do whatever she wishes and watch your chance. It may be the chance that saves all of us."

After quite a long moment, the correspondent replied. "Right, Otway. Playing the cur. Glad you spoke. I'll—I'll go out. Here, you! Can't you see I'm coming? Start that music again!"

The girl, as if weary of waiting, had lowered the pipes from her lips. The instant she did so, the swaying monster behind had ceased to sway. With an ominous, dry clashing of avid mandibles, its head shot higher. It descended again in a curving loop that cleared the girl's head and, too obviously, had the open cell for its objective.

Seeing the prisoner obedient, however, the girl resumed her music. Immediately the menacing head swayed back to its former position.

The freed correspondent faced the pair grimly. That slender slip of a girl, whom he could have easily lifted with one hand, was for the time his master. To overcome or interfere with her in any way meant death. To slay big, powerful Alcot Waring, she had only to cease the restraining music of her little golden pipes.

The dawn-blue eyes were deep, sweetly mournful as ever. But even Sigsbee failed to suggest that Waring should place faith in them and act in any way save exactly as she might direct.

Her next order was given as the first had been. One delicate hand waved in a graceful gesture.

"You're elected, too, Otway," informed the correspondent. "Wants me to open your door. Shall I do it? Up to you."

The explorer affirmed his own unshaken nerve by instant consent. The same key that had released Waring having freed Otway from the bronze shackles, he stepped out beside the other.

"You know," he observed quietly, "they took my shell-rims, and everything nearer than three yards is just a blur. Only hope I shan't tread on Fido!"

"Stand still!" Waring advised between his teeth. "The damn thing is all over the place. What's she after now? Oh, I see. Sig, your divinity calls you!"

"I believe she intends releasing us all," opined the explorer, still resolutely cheerful. "In that case, we'll surely get a chance among the five of us."

"Oh, sure! Stiff upper lip and carry on."

To appreciate, however, the real deadliness of their peril was just then far easier than to foresee in what form that hoped-for chance was likely to come.

For one thing, "Fido's" mentality was proving to be as abnormal as its physical proportions. They had at first supposed that the monster merely answered the music as snakes writhe to the charmer's pipes. But its behavior before the cell-rank augured both training and intelligence. It was not dancing now. It was waiting—and what it waited upon was the will of its mistress.

As for the thing's destructive capacity, that was obviously terrific. In one lightning sweep it might have involved not five but a dozen men amid taloned coils beside which those of a python would have been easily escapable. The huge poison-fangs with which the first segment of its body was equipped, seemed really superfluous.

John B. was the last captive to be released. The number of her victims complete, the girl gestured toward one of the open lanes.

With their extraordinary jailors close at heel, the five moved meekly toward the outer court.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DANCE

THE proceedings of the next half-hour formed a study in grotesquerie exceeding anything which even the captives' experience of pyramidal customs had led them to look for.

They had, it appeared, been haled forth to take part in the same ceremonial dance which their coming had interrupted the previous evening.

After bringing them out, indeed, the girl herself practically ignored them. As her light feet carried her about the sacred circle, she seemed wholly absorbed in an ecstasy of music and rhythmic motion. But the ghastly enforcer of her will gave the captives every attention.

The thing was clearly no novice in its part. Its age, of course, was unguessable. But one could conceive that years—decades—centuries, perhaps, had seen the slow growth and training of that monstrous votary. Nocturnal by nature, the vast, dull yellow eyes might have been blind as they appeared. If so, the sense of sight was replaced by those other, more mysterious senses which creatures of its species inherit. The whiplike antennae were continually alert. The thing's intelligence, too, seemed not confined to the brain, as in vertebrate animals, but instinct in every part of its active length.

The girl dancer need make no effort to avoid contact with the coils. They avoided her. Her foot could not move quickly enough to tread upon them. But of the unwilling male participants in the rite, the monster was less considerate.

A mere scratch from one of those myriad dagger-pointed talons would have amounted to a severe wound, quite aside from the infection they probably carried. The menace of them was used with amazing skill to force the prisoners around the appointed circle.

The stairway proved to be a blessed goal unreachable. At the slightest move in that direction, up would rise a barrier of clawing segments. With bare feet and limbs, to have dared overleaping or standing before it would have been madness, even had not the worser threat of the head and poison fangs hovered ever close above them.

Of the five, Otway's troubles were the most dismaying. In the absence of glasses, his eyes were of little use to him at close range. Again and again, only the guiding hand of a fellow-initiate saved him from calamity. Had the explorer been alone he could not have survived even one round of that horrible, ludicrous, altogether abominable dance.

Yet the indomitable spirit of Otway was first to recognize the ridiculous side of the affair. He and Waring presently joined in a running fire of comment on its absurdities. Tellifer, solemn as ever, moved through the literal—and talon fringed—"mazes of the dance," with an effort at classic dignity which won their high commendation. John B.'s quiet, efficient side-stepping went not unnoted. But it remained for Sigsbee to win the jesters' really wholehearted approval.

It had dawned on them that the expedition's youngest member was not merely avoiding trouble, like the rest of them. He was actually dancing, modeling his steps on those of their graceful leader, and doing very well indeed at it. Sigsbee was an agile, athletic youth. The "cave-man costume" emphasized a certain grace of body and regularity of feature. Very soon, having perfected the step to suit his ambition, Sigsbee coolly deserted his fellow-captives. Taking advantage of every convenient change in the monster's running coils, he joined the girl.

"There are a lot of these steps," he called back, "that my sister at home taught me. Crazy about this—nature-dancing stuff. Oh, fine! That's a regular—fox-trot—step. Say, you fellows! I've seen this girl—before, somewhere! Been trying—to remember where—ever since—last night. Or else she—reminds me of some one."

"She reminded me"—Tellifer avoided a section of talons by one second's time and an undignified bound—"she reminded *me*," he repeated more forcibly, "of a girl in a poem. But not any more. Blessed Damozel!" Another leap and increased bitterness. "Where are her three lilies? Where is her—gold bar of heaven? Where—her sense of fitness? I could have pardoned the—jaguar-hide—if she hadn't forced one on me. I could have forgiven the—undignified dancing—if she hadn't made me join in it. Now—I disown the comparison. All she has is—the stars in her hair and the—eyes—and they are basely deceptive. She is not a Blessed Damozel! She's a—"

He hesitated for a fresh comparison. When found, it would probably have been inoffensive enough. Tellifer's classic fancy rarely sought force in vulgarity. But young Sigsbee had again been indulging at close range in glimpses of the eyes Tellifer slandered. He came to an abrupt halt, fists clenched.

"Not another word, there!" he called sharply.

The girl was within a yard of him. As if in appreciation of her gallant defender, she swayed still nearer, stretched one hand and touched Sigsbee lightly on the shoulder. At the same time, she lowered the pipes from her lips. She pointed with them toward one of the five men.

There followed a swift yellow flash—a sharp, broken-off cry.

Again the pipes were set to the girl's lips. Up swayed the colossal yellow head to resume its guardianship of the victims. But there were only four of them now who required guarding!

The girl danced no more. She continued to play her piping melody, but the great, mournful eyes beneath the star-crown grew brilliant with slowly forming tears.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SACRIFICE

"WHAT the devil good is her weeping, Sig? She deliberately pointed. And that horror knocked poor old TNT into the pit! He's there now. Can't get out. We're locked in here. Thirty minutes at most till noon. And that little Jezebel you're infatuated with comes to weep over him! Who cares how she feels? Actions speak!"

It was morning of the next day. That four of the party, even in the face of that yellow Death, had consented to return to their cells after the abrupt end of last night's grotesque ceremony, had been due to Tellifer's own appeal.

Beyond a few bruises, the latter had not been injured. When the girl, as Waring accused, had deliberately showed her terrible familiar that Tellifer was the evening's appointed victim, the unlucky esthete had been a little apart from his companions, close to the eight-sided pit. The great cephalite or head-shield of the monster had struck Tellifer between the shoulders with battering-ram force.

Knocked off his feet, he had rolled upon one of the treacherous pentagonal slabs that surrounded the sooty pit. He had gone down head first, but, sliding down the steep slope of the bowl, had arrived at the bottom without being stunned.

He had presently replied to the anxious hails of his friends. When it became clear that the latter were required to return to their cells, leaving him in the pit, he had urged them to do so. For them to be slain on the spot could do him no good. And in the hours before Sunfire should again justify its name he might escape from the pit.

Waring had made a gallant effort to join his friend. But he had been blocked by the alert yellow death's-head, and finally allowed himself to be driven back with the others. As the correspondent had been required to release his fellow-slaves, so the girl saw to it that he duly re-shackled and boxed them up. Under the gentle glance of those pitying eyes, Waring had finished the task by adjusting his own fetters and tossing the key out to her. The thing was maddening beyond words, but there had seemed no alternative save death.

The monster had then been led back to its lair, and the girl had bolted down the bronze cover that debarred its return and departed.

It had seemed that the captive of the pit, left thus unguarded, must surely find some way to climb out and release his companions. Yet dawn had returned, bringing Tellifer's strange executioner to march slowly up the sky, and that means still remained undiscovered. Though the pit was deadly through only a part of the day, alone in it Tellifer was helpless as a beetle at the bottom of a bowl.

As the morning wore on and the temperature of the court slowly rose, Tellifer ceased his efforts to climb out. The time soon came when shouted advice or questions from the cell-rank drew no response. That the victim might be already dead, or in heavy stupor, appeared the best hope left for him.

Small wonder, then, that when a slender form drifted on light feet across the central court, poised beside one of the eight columns, and at last sank down there, a figure of desolate mourning, Waring had cursed her and her grief together. Chivalry was all very well, and Waring was not deficient therein. But a weeping she-fiend who chained him in a stone cell, prepared the agonizing murder of the closest friend, and then came to mourn over her work while watching its progress, seemed to him outside the pale of toleration.

In young Sigsbee, grief for the victim was still strangely united with concern for their betrayer. But his view met scant sympathy in any quarter. Otway expressed his own attitude with decision.

"That woman," said he, grimly just, "is acting under compulsion of some sort. Probably, superstitious religious training. But were she what she appears, the revulsion of her nature against all this vile, cold-blooded treachery and cruelty, would not stop at mere weeping. She is of white blood, but she disgraces it. Any Indian woman, feeling as she pretends to feel, would dare the wrath of her people on earth and the gods beyond and be true to the humane instinct. It's no use, Sigsbee! A man is dying in that infernal hole, and she isn't doing a thing to help him—is she?"

"She goes there and cries!" snarled Waring. "Cries over him! And not the bare decency to give him a drink of water. Not a drop of water in nearly eighteen hours! My God, Otway—"

"Steady, old man. You can be pretty sure he isn't suffering now. The chances are that he won't revive enough to realize what is happening to him. *I* know that sun. Under that great lens above the pit, and with no water—why, the poor fellow probably went out soon after he stopped answering our hails, two hours ago. Is the girl still hanging about there? I wonder she can endure the heat."

"She's such a kind of queer creature," offered John B. gloomily, "that I don't reckon it's possible to guess what she could or couldn't stand, sir. I've met lots of queer kinds, different places, but I didn't suppose there could be one just like her. She seems to me a lot more horrible than that big centipede, sir."

"She isn't!" cried the youthful Sigsbee despairingly. "She's—Oh, I don't know what she is, but I tell you that girl is *not* wicked! It's all some abominable mistake!"

"Mistake that poor old TNT is dead or dying there? Mistake that she's hovering over him like—like a weeping vulture?"

"No, she isn't, Waring. She's gone away—or at least, I think she has. There's such a glare that a fellow can't see much."

"The focus," Otway observed, "must have been complete for some minutes past. My friends, poor Tellifer is—"

He paused. Indeed, to finish the sentence was needless. The sun, centered now in a brazen sky, had too obviously reached the full altitude of its murderous mission.

Waring was worst hit, but the others felt badly enough. The esthete had been eccentric, fanciful, sometimes more than a little trying; but with all his moods and nerves, he had carried a reckless bravery; there had been a certain odd, innocent loveableness about him.

Dim against the blinding glory beyond, a slender form flitted past the sullenly silent cell rank. To the left, where rose the bronze lever that controlled the great stone bowl, a slight, metallic, grating sound was heard.

Sigsbee and Otway, whose cells were nearest the center, vaguely beheld the phantomlike rising of a huge rounded mass beneath Sunfire.

A few seconds later the faint but unmistakable splash of a solid mass striking water far below reached their ears.

CHAPTER TWELVE

REVENGE!

"CUT it, Sig! I'm past caring. That little Jezebel murdered Tellifer! Woman? Murderess — torturer — she-

fiend! Tears? Yes—of the crocodile brand. Part of her stock-in-trade. Don't know what the rest of 'em are like here. Maybe there aren't any others. Maybe she and that old hag I saw are the last of a rotten crop. But fifty or a thousand, take this from me: little Susan is head-devil of the lot! We're all due to go West. One at a time or en masse. No difference. But *she's* going with us! Oh, she's wise. Kept out of my reach just now. If she hadn't, I'd have—But no matter. She'll release us again. She'll trust that crawling horror to protect her. And then—" The vengeful correspondent's voice sank to a sinister whisper—"*then I'll get her!*"

Night had returned, bringing the silent, strange little food-bearer with her basket of fruit and small water-jars. She had come alone as before, but there had been a slight variation. The first time she had handed in the provisions at close range, seeming assured that the prisoners would not try to harm her.

Tonight she had brought a second, much smaller basket. Before each cell she had filled this small receptacle from the large one, and gravely extended it, keeping such distance that the reach of a man's arm through one of the triangular windows might achieve a grasp on the basket, but not on her hands. Emptied by the cell's occupant, the basket must be tossed back and used again.

The procedure indicated a clear understanding of the bitterness toward her. Yet, aside from this, there had been no change in appearance or manner. The eyes that blessed and grieved were innocent of evil as before.

While she passed along the rank, none of the four had spoken a word to her. She had never indicated that she understood, when they had addressed her. Words were useless. Moreover, there had come to be something indescribably shocking in that difference between her acts and the promise of all gentle good in her appearance.

One flash of mockery, one taunting curl of the childlike mouth, and the whole affair, terrible though it was, would have seemed a shade more endurable. But the taunt never came. She pitied them, it seemed, deeply. She had no consciousness of wrong toward them, but to witness their captivity and consider the fate on its way to them, grieved her. Sad, very sad, that in the world should be pain and mourning and the ludicrous, maddening helplessness of four strong men at the mercy of one slender maiden!

In Waring, the effect of all this came dangerously near to real madness. Agony over Tellifer's lingering death had instilled his friend with a ruthless hate, against which dissuasive arguments beat vainly. Waring's threats, uttered after the girl had gone, were sincere!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AN AWFUL CRIME

AN HOUR later, and again the grotesque ceremonial progress of victims and captors about the sacrificial pit.

Between this occasion and the first, however, were differences. Not only was the captive band's number reduced to four, but these four moved with a strangely absorbed interest in each other.

Otway, blinking desperately, must rely on the steward alone to warn and guide him. Young Sigsbee had lost his enthusiasm for "nature dancing." Silently, without admission of their purpose, he and Waring were engaged in a duel of approach and defense.

At the cells, as if aware of her danger, the girl had passed Waring by and laid on John B. the task of releasing himself and his fellows. The last had been first and the first last with such effect that when Waring finally emerged, sinister purpose in the very poise of his massive person, he had found a barrier of three men between him and his quarry.

There had been some words exchanged, then. In the very shadow of death, the quartette had come close to a violent quarrel. Unreasoning accusations of disloyalty from Waring, however, were met by a cool counter-accusation from Otway that headed off active strife. Woman-killing aside, said the naturalist, Waring had no right to rob the rest of any slim little chance for life the evening might bring.

On that score, Waring had grimly yielded. But he made no promises for his behavior in the court's more open field. There, should he attack the dancer, he would surely be slain. But while the monster's attention was upon him, the others might grasp their "slim chance for life" and welcome.

The compromise was neither accepted nor declined, because just at that point the obligato from the Pan's pipes had ceased and the disputants had hastily taken the hint and the outward path. But though no more was said, Waring's set determination was plain enough.

The dancer, as before, danced as though alone in the hollow pyramid. The hideous, scampering coils that followed and surrounded them all might have been bodiless smoke-wreaths, so far as she was concerned. The angry, maddened giant of a man whose bloodshot glances gloated threateningly on her light movements had no seeming existence for her.

But young Sigsbee knew that her danger was very real indeed.

Forty-eight hours in the pyramid had reduced a big, good-humored, civilized man to a savage with one idea in his head, and one only. Waring had stood by helpless while the friend he loved was tortured to death. Now, unshaven, red-eyed, massive and dangerous as the "cave-man" he resembled, the correspondent stalked his indifferent prey, while again and again Sigsbee took outrageous risks to keep his own person between them.

In actual physical conflict, the young yacht-owner would have had little chance with the correspondent. For all his fleshiness, Waring was quick as a cat, light-moving almost as the little dancer herself—far more powerful than Sigsbee. But even a few seconds of bodily struggle would mean death for both. Neither dared pause an instant in that constant avoidance of hideous running claws.

Sigsbee got no help from the girl's official defender. Whatever its training, the monstrous guardian lacked intelligence to understand that strange duel between captives over the life of their tyrant. Its scampering talons threatened defender and attacker alike.

The end came at last with great suddenness.

For just an instant the girl poised motionless in one of the graceful poses that interspersed the dance steps. Tellifer's avenger had achieved a place not six feet from her. Sigsbee was momentarily entrapped in a running loop, the inner edge of which had flung up knee-high above the floor.

Seeing his chance, Waring took it like a flash.

In almost the same instant a number of things happened. What some of them were was understood by only one person; the rest merely found themselves involved in a chaos of peril.

Waring sprang. Sigsbee, taking another desperate chance, bounded over the clawing loop. He collided in mid-air with his massive opponent. The two crashed heavily down at the girl's very feet.

John B., a little distance off, saw the hovering yellow death's head swing around with a darting motion. He shouted warningly. But the combat-

ants on the floor were seeking each other's throats with a whole-hearted attention which ignored the shout. The girl shrank back a step—and lowered her Pan's pipes.

At that signal, John B. saw the hovering head rise a trifle. Those curved daggers, its poison-fangs, opened wide. All the scampering pattern of segments halted—the head poised—

And then, instead of shooting downward, John B. saw the head give a great, sweeping jerk sideways.

Inexplicably, it flung over and struck the side of the faceted, luminous crystal above the pit.

Next instant it was as if a yellowish tornado had been loosed in the central court. The air seemed full of a blurred chaos of convulsive segments.

The yellow blur flashed around the pit, enveloped the eight pillars in a coiling cloud. The cloud condensed—became the taloned, yellow length again, but wrapped around the columns in a straining, writhing skein. Up from this skein rose the head, twisting from side to side as if in agony.

Above the pit, a single, distinct, ringing sound shivered out—a quivering *ping-g-g*, as of a great crystal goblet sharply struck. It was followed by a silent concussive shock—a kind of bursting scintillance of white glare. Then, like the downward swoop of a vast, black wing, utter darkness.

IN THE central court men called to one another in hoarse shouts, groped and blindly sought each other.

They could not understand! The monstrous creature of talons and venom was gone. At least, the dry rustle and clash which had accompanied its presence were no longer heard. Cautiously exploring feet found none of the dangerous segments.

In that first mad flurry of rage, convulsive agony, or whatever had smitten it, the thing had knocked John B. and the explorer off their feet, and one of the talons, catching in Otway's furry tunic, had broken the shoulder-straps and jerked it partly off him. Aside from this, no damage had been sustained by any of the four captives.

Waring and Sigsbee had forsaken their death-grapple. Meeting at last, the other couple found them like a pair of dazed children, hand in hand, seeking nothing save escape from the incomprehensible.

The light of Sunfire had exploded to a scintillant glare and left them blind. Overhead, in a humid, blue-black sky, great stars winked down at them, but not brightly enough to shed one revealing ray on this latest mystery of the pyramid.

Girl, monster and glowing crystal, the three presiding elements of their strange captivity, seemed to have been simultaneously wiped out of existence. The jaguar-hide tunics alone were left as assurance that the experience had been a real one.

Suddenly, in the dark, young Sigsbee grasped the arm of his late adversary.

"Look!" he gasped. "Look up at the rim there! A light—and somebody crouched down beside it!"

There on the pyramid's rim indeed, fifty feet above, a small light glowed warm and yellow. It showed what seemed to be the form of a man. It was not standing nor even looking down toward them. The form squatted with rounded shoulders and bent head. Its face was hidden in its hands. The attitude was one of overpowering grief.

A moment later and the figure had risen slowly. It raised the light, evidently a common oil lantern, and began a leisurely descent of the inner stair. As it came on, the head was still bent and the shoulders drooped dejectedly.

"*Who* in God's name?" breathed Waring—and was silent.

They were four civilized men, who did not believe in demons, apparitions, nor that, as primitive folk hold, the newly dead are restless and may rise in their lifeless flesh. Therefore they stood their ground.

It was true that for Mr. Theron Narcisse Tellifer, or any other man of flesh and blood, to have spent those last hours exposed without water in the heat of the pit, passed at least ten minutes beneath the fully-focussed rays, and finally been dropped five hundred feet or so to some dark pool within the pyramid's base, and still survive, was, on the face of it, more incredible than even the living-dead theory. It was also true that Waring's hand closed on Otway's bare shoulder in a grip that left the shoulder numb, and the explorer was not even conscious of it. Still—they stood their ground.

He—it—the thing that wore Tellifer's seeming—had gotten rid of the indecorous jaguar-hide-and-gold-bangles effect, and was again dressed for roughing it in civilized style. A very small, light rifle was carried under one arm.

Reaching the lower level, the mysterious being raised its dejected head, lifted the lantern, and spoke.

"The final consummation of an awful crime," it began, "has been accomplished! Alcot, I know that you are there somewhere and alive, for I heard you swearing. I trust that you are satisfied! You denied that Sunfire, that lost miracle of loveliness, was a diamond. You were wrong. Sunfire *was* a diamond, though it is now, alas, only a shattered wreck of dust and fragments! Wondrous though its beauty, Sunfire was but a vast carbon crystal. The heat beating upward from the pit must long since have prepared this end. The stone could never have been re-cut. It could hardly have been lifted down intact from the columns. The impact of my unlucky air-gun bullet striking the side dissolved it in a shining cloud of dust! My friends, I was fairly certain yesterday that Sunfire's ruin had been wrought. But to have finished the evil work of those ignorant vandals with my own hand! I wish—I wish that I had returned to New York by liner from Para, as I was tempted to do!"

While the voice spoke, no one had even thought of interrupting its sad discourse. As it ceased, Waring drew a great breath.

"That," said he with deep conviction, "that's Tellifer! Darn you, TNT! All these hours and—yes, you even took time to shave! How'd you get out of that bowl? Why didn't you come back sooner? D'you know you nearly made a damn, cold-blooded woman murderer of me? Come here with that lantern. My foot just struck something. It's the girl! Is she—is she badly hurt, Sigsbee?"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

FLIGHT

ON EXAMINATION by lantern-light, the mysterious little tyrant of the pyramid was found to be still breathing. As there were no wounds on her, it was decided that she had fainted from shock or fright.

Dread that her monstrous companion might be lurking near in the darkness was soon dissipated. Over beyond the pit, a vast tangled heap of loathsome yellow proved to be the thing's lifeless body. The head-shield trailed out on the pavement, presented a very peculiar appearance. One of the eyes was pierced by a small, round bullet hole. Also, the entire head plate was scarred with innumerable scratches and perforations through which oozed a whitish, semi-liquid substance.

Chalmers replied listlessly to many questions, while Sigsbee and the steward bathed the unconscious girl's brow with some of the water she had brought them in their cells.

Waring watched these ministrations with concern. Discovery that her watch over a tortured man's death, and the cold-blooded dumping of his corpse afterward, had been acts only of seeming, had wrought a change in even the correspondent's feeling toward her. Why she had "gone through the motions," as Waring phrased it, was not at all clear. But Tellifer's story revealed that he had certainly not been present while she wept over his supposed agony. The thing actually dumped, when she threw the lever, was a piece of rock.

Use of the lantern for examination of the pit confirmed his tale. Near the bottom of the great bowl was now a large, irregular aperture. The shock which cracked the stone when Tellifer allowed it to swing back, full weight, the first evening, had saved the experimenter's life. There had then been a jaggd, branching crevice. The shrinking effect of next day's white-hot noon-focus had completed the work.

Tellifer explained that about the time he ceased answering their hails, he had discovered that a part of the bowl's curving side was in actual fragments, only held in place by pressure. With the buckle of his metal girdle he had managed to pry out one of the smaller pieces till he could get finger-grip on it. After its removal, taking out the larger fragments was easy.

He had, he said, refrained from telling his friends of this, partly because he was too dry to speak easily, and partly out of consideration—lest he raise false hopes. No, he hadn't expected them to thank him for that. But how could he know that he was going to get through alive? Very well. He would continue the story if there were not too many interruptions.

His first idea had been a dive into the depths. On casting down several of the rock fragments, resulting splashes told him that there was water below. Well, if his friends had heard no such splashes, he was not responsible for that. They were making so much noise yelling at him that the fact was not surprising. Such a dive, however, proved needless.

Through the hole he had found himself able to swing by his hands and fling himself sideways into an open, floored space beneath the upper pavement. It was very dark down there, but, feeling about, he had come upon a system of great metal bars and cylinders. It dawned on him that the ancient engineers had arranged the machinery which revolved the bowl in an open horizontal shaft, probably for convenience in case of breakdown. There seemed a chance that at the other end of this shaft he might find an exit.

Stumbling through blackness, he had come upon a narrow flight of stairs, had fallen down them, and, upon recovering from that a little, had found himself near an open doorway at the back of one of the outer buildings, in the fifth terrace of the pyramid's western plane.

Though privations, a bad night and his latest tumble had left him very weak, he remembered the need of his friends. He had managed to drag himself around to the eastern stair and down it to water-level. After drinking and getting himself a little food aboard the canoe, he had lain down to rest a few minutes.

Nature had betrayed him and it was dusk when he awoke. Yes, certainly he had slept all afternoon. While in the bowl he had hardly been able to sleep at all. Their shouts had disturbed him. Very well. He would accept the apologies and continue.

Though not a practical man, he had deemed best to be prepared in every way possible to meet difficulties. Therefore he had taken time to eat again and exchange that abominable jaguar-hide for a more dignified costume. Also to shave. Yes, he felt that the moral support received from these two latter acts was worth the time expended on them. He was not a practical man—

"Oh, get on with it, TNT!" grinned his friend. "Providence looks out for such as you—and us. You surely made a clean finish. Maybe the shave helped. How'd you happen to think of the air-gun?"

Tellifer had, it seemed, recalled efforts of his own to shoot loons on the northern lakes. This is an impossible feat since the birds dive at the flash and are beneath the surface before the charge can reach them. Applying past experience to present emergency, it occurred to him that if there was no flash, the monstrous centipede could not take warning.

The air-rifle, which belonged to Otway, was a very powerful one. Because of its small caliber, however, Tellifer had not meant to use it except in dire need. Climbing to the pyramid's rim, he had seen his comrades led forth, and watched with much interest and curiosity the singular evolutions of Waring and Sigsbee. When they finally flew at one another's throats, and the venomous yellow head poised to strike, he had perceived that the air-gun idea must be tried out at once.

The first shot struck one of the monster's enormous eyes. The second missed the head and hit the great crystal.

Like any diamond that has been subjected to high temperatures, Sunfire had acquired a brittleness that made it more fragile than glass. It had "splintered" at the impact, with such completeness as had all the effect of a silent explosion.

The monster had been slain, not by the bullets, but by Sunfire. Over a dozen feet above floor-level, Sunfire had perished without claiming any further human victims. But the head of its monstrous votary, almost in contact with the exploding crystal, had been perforated by the sharp dust and splinters.

Practical man or not, it appeared that with a couple of shots from an air-gun TNT had made a complete clean-up of the two main perils of the pyramid. The third—if peril she could be termed outside her relations with the other two—was left at the mercy of her victims.

It was decided to carry the girl with them to the canoe. Food, a night's rest, and counsel, were needed before any effort was made to seek out the pyramid's other and strangely retiring inhabitants. For one thing, there was the question of weapons. Beside the air-rifle, a couple of shotguns and a spare Winchester had been left on board the canoe. But all their small fire-arms and the rifles they had carried the first night, were in the enemies' hands. Even were the "tribe" few in number, this superiority of armament made seeking them an adventure to be approached cautiously.

They had had enough of reckless indiscretion. Hereafter every act should be well considered. The conquest of the pyramid, begun by Tellifer, should be carried to a finish with the least possible risk.

So they spoke, like wise, intelligent men, the while they viewed pityingly the unconscious form of their dethroned tyrant.

Waring in particular, seeing her, frail, graceful, with her face of a sleeping child supported on Sigsbee's knee, felt a hot wave of shame and a great wonder at himself.

This child had been brought up in these barbaric surroundings. Doubtless religious training had fought the gentle instincts natural to her, and made her bitterly unhappy. She had done as she had been taught was right, and in the doing—suffered.

She seemed rousing, at last. Color had returned to the tender lips. The steadfast, reverent boy who held her, smoothed back a curling tendril of the red-gold hair. Waring, shamefacedly gentle, dropped to his knees and attempted to take one of the fragile wrists. His innocent intent was to feel the pulse. But Sigsbee struck at his hand in a flare of resentment which showed that a certain recent incident was neither forgotten nor forgiven.

The rebuke was accepted with meekness. Waring retreated. He felt less a man at that moment than ever in his life before.

The great eyes opened slowly, closed, opened again. The lantern in Tellifer's hand showed a look of frightened doubt —of dawning wonder. She struggled to raise herself.

Not one of her freed captives spoke. Perhaps they were all a little curious to see how she would bear herself in the face of this changed situation. They were not left long in doubt.

She had risen to a half-crouching position, slender limbs drawn up under her. For a long minute she stared from figure to figure of those about her. They had never seen her show any signs of fear. But now something like abject terror was creeping into the dawn-blue eyes.

With a quick jerk of the head, she glanced behind her. The solicitous face of the youngest "cave-man" at her back seemed to reassure her not at all.

She looked down, fingered the gold bangles on the edge of her jaguar-hide tunic, raised the Pan's pipes, still firmly clasped in one hand, inspected the fateful instrument—and—

It happened so quickly that five wise, intelligent men had plunged into a fresh indiscretion before they had time to think about it.

With a low cry, the girl flung the Pan's pipes from her. The slender, gathered limbs shot her erect. She sprang sideways, ducked under Waring's arm, upflung to check her, and was off across the court!

They had seen her dance. This was their first opportunity to see her run. The quondam captives charged after, but the shadow of a flying cloud would have been as easy to catch.

The door in the southeastern wall stood open. It closed with a *clang* before the pursuers had crossed half the intervening space. Reaching it, they learned that the illusive one's panic had been genuine. She had not paused to bar the door behind her. It had even swung open again an inch or so.

Hurled wide, it revealed a long flight of descending stairs. Tellifer held the lantern high. Part way down the flight, a flash of starlike jewels—the flirt of a flying jaguar-hide tunic.

Discretion? The masculine fever of the hunt had them now. Four unshaven, wild-eyed cave-men and one civilized and freshly enthused esthete plunged recklessly down in pursuit of the flying tunic.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DOWN THE STAIR

THE descent proved not so deep as it had seemed from above. Thirty seconds brought the pursuers to a blank wall and a landing.

The flirting tunic had flashed around the corner ahead of them. They turned after it. The landing proved to mark a right-angular turn in the stair.

Not very far ahead now the starry jewels glittered and bobbed to the flying leaps of their wearer. Suddenly there was a sharper plunge—a shrill cry.

Tellifer's long legs had carried him into the lead, but now the youngest "cave-man" cleared four steps at a bound and took the lead away from him.

"She's fallen!"

Sigsbee's voice wailed back in an anguish of solicitude. By the time the lantern caught up with him again he had reached a second landing—had gathered in his arms a slender, softly-moaning form that lay there.

Tellifer arrived, panting. He raised the lantern.

Sigsbee stared down at the form his arms guarded. He made a queer little choking sound in his throat. Then, not roughly, but with considerable haste, he laid the form down on the stone landing.

As he did so, its lower limbs trailed limply, but a clawlike hand at the end of a scrawny arm darted scratchingly upward. A quick jerk of the head just saved Sigsbee's cheek from mutilation.

The toothless mouth of the creature he had laid down mowed and chattered wordlessly. Gray, ragged locks strayed from beneath a circlet of glittering stars. The spotted jaguar-hide was clasped over scrawny, yellowish shoulders. The contorted face glared up with terrible eyes —eyes that had feasted long on cruelty and raged now, aware that their years of evil power were spent, but dying with a frank, though wordless, curse for the victims that had escaped.

The claw-hand made another dash for Sigsbee's face—flung back—beat upon the floor convulsively. A shuddering heave of the upper body—a strangled, gurgling sound—

"Dead!" said Waring a minute later. "Broken spine. It's the old hag I saw. But how, in God's name—where'd the girl get to?"

The question was more interesting than any of them cared to admit. Descending those two flights of stairs, they had passed no doorway nor openings of any kind through which she might have turned aside and eluded them. Of course, there was the possibility of some disguised, secret passage. Yet, if so, why had the old woman not retreated by the same road?

It was a question which poor Sigsbee made not even an effort to answer. He was very white, looked strangely older. He was shivering in the dank, breathless chill that enveloped them.

There were no sounds down here, nor any light, save that of Tellifer's lantern.

This lower landing was really the foot of the stair. Off from it opened a triangular arch. Standing in the arch, they found themselves peering into what seemed a great, eight-sided vault or chamber. The lantern did not suffice to illuminate the far walls, but those nearby were chiseled in colossal forms of women, dancing as the girl had danced, charming loathsome monsters with their Pan's pipes.

The place, damp as an underground tomb, contained no furnishings. The only signs of human occupation were several vague heaps of what appeared to be clothing.

On investigation, the explorers found stacked there an accumulation of divers garments in as many stages of freshness and mouldering rot as marked the derelict fleet on the lake. Most were trade-cloth shirts and more or less ragged trousers, such as the rubber-workers wear. There were also better outfits that bespoke the white man. The cassock of a Jesuit priest was among them, falling apart with great age. Also, the heavy costume and hood which told them that the gray hydro-airplane on the lake might wait in vain for the return of its pilot.

The five found their own clothing, and also their weapons stacked on a great pile that included the rust-caked, muzzle-loading guns of dead *seringueiros*, some modern weapons ruined by the damp, a reed blow-pipe, and a great, badly warped bow of raripari wood with a quiver of long arrows.

Nothing of theirs was missing. John B. even found and restored to the naturalist his precious shell-rims. But the vault reeked and dripped with malodorous dampness. The rotting garments exhaled a breath as from the tomb of their former owners.

Very silent in that lifeless place, the five returned to the stairfoot and bent above the withered dead thing there. The starry diamonds in its hideous hair gleamed with a cold, wicked luster.

Where was the mournful, innocent child who had entrapped them? She who had—dwelt, perhaps, in this tomb-like lair?

"I am going away from here," announced Tellifer abruptly. "I don't like this place! It is—*ugly!*"

No one objected. Despite cave-man costumes, they were civilized men who did not believe in vampires, demons, or hideous night-hags that dwelt in underground vaults and issued forth to trap victims with a false illusion of loveliness. Yet they felt that further investigation of the pyramid might wait for a later time. The chill atmosphere was sickening. They wanted open air—wanted it badly.

Due to this need, their return to the upper level was marked with a certain haste. The gardened court held nothing to keep them lingering. Only a very few minutes were needed to reach the rim and negotiate the outer descent.

The traveling-canoe—exceptional among the derelicts—received its returning crew. There was something consoling, something sane and homelike in the very feel of its deck-planks. But it occurred to them that the night would be passed more pleasantly at a distance from the pyramid.

Then, having paddled out a way, somebody suggested that if anything—anyone, that is, of course—were inclined to be dissatisfied with their escape and come after them, the rest of the fleet offered a too-convenient means.

Despite fatigue and starvation, they found strength to paddle back and attend to this potential menace. In consequence, it was nearly midnight when they at last dropped anchor. By the time they had finished supper, cooked on the vapor-stove, three of them were past recking of perilous pyramids and suspicions that diabolical philosophy might have more reason in it than they had believed. Sleep gripped these three like a heavy drug. Tellifer, who, having slept all afternoon was elected watchman, gave characteristic respect to duty by drowsing off soon afterward.

Sigsbee, however, did not sleep. On the foredeck, he lay for hours, staring at the mountainous black mass outlined by humid starshine. There was no faint luminescence hovering above it now. *Tata Quarahy*—Fire of the Sun—was destroyed. Its monstrous guardian lay dead. Its priestess—?

Young Sigsbee felt very strange and old and uncertain about it all. Yet if at any time that night a light had flashed in the dark mass, or a voice had called, he would not have roused the others. He would have taken his life and his soul in his hands and gone back alone to the pyramid.

SUNRISE, and the eastward stair a flaming height of red and orange and gold.

The reflected splendor, beating on Tellifer's face, awakened him. He opened his eyes, recalled that he was a watchman, sat up and viewed the pyramid in conscientious scrutiny.

It was still there, and its loveliness in this early morning light atoned in a measure, he decided, for the ugly things that had gone on inside of it. Those things seemed very dreamlike and remote this morning. As for a vampirish night-hag who could appear at will as a beautiful girl—Tellifer considered the idea with interest. Last night he had wanted nothing save to get away from it, but this morning his fanciful taste dealt with it more kindly.

Sunrise is a bad hour, however, to believe in ghosts and vampires. Tellifer regretfully shook his head. Then he uttered a sharp ejaculation, shot to his feet, dived into the cabin and was back an instant later, a pair of binoculars in his hand. En route, he had given a rousing kick to the correspondent and Otway.

Stumbling forth, they found their alert night-watchman with binoculars focused on the head of the sun-lit stair.

Far up there, against the background of flaming stone, a small, dark figure was moving.

Waring ruthlessly appropriated the binoculars by force, while the equally curious Otway squeezed against his shoulder as if trying to get at least one eye to the glasses.

Sigsbee, who had dropped asleep just before dawn, roused, took in the scene, and reached the group in a bound. His boyish voice broke and crackled.

"Is it she? Is she alive? Is she coming down?"

Waring shook his head. "Somebody's coming down. But it isn't a 'she,' Sig. It's—Yet how *can* that be? The cells were empty—and we saw—"

"I know," Tellifer cut in. "We saw his clothing down there with that of all the other dead men. But this pyramid, Alcot, is not limited as are less distinguished haunts of the un-dead. Night, noon or sunrise, its ghosts may walk as they please. The ghost of the air-pilot comes now to offer his congratulations on our escape!"

But no one was paying attention to Tellifer.

Sigsbee, in turn, had annexed the glasses. What he saw through them caused him to give a kind of choking gasp, and thereafter, on the selfish score that they were his, he kept the binoculars.

The figure, however, soon came near enough so that even with the naked eye its costume, at least, was unmistakable. The goggles were pushed up visor-like on the close-fitting hood. A trifle awkwardly in the loose, heavily lined suit, the mysterious air-pilot whom they had once thought to rescue, accomplished the full descent.

He walked slowly forward on the broad stone landing stage. Reaching the edge, he contemplated the canoe, turned his gaze to the airplane, returned it to the canoe.

Then he called across to those aboard the latter. The voice was slightly tremulous!

"I beg your pardon! After all that has happened, I dislike so much to trouble you! But you've taken all the boats away. Would you mind very much if I asked you to just—just push one in where I can reach it and paddle out to my 'plane?"

Sigsbee dropped his binoculars. They splashed unheeded in the lake. His companions were in pajamas, blanket-draped but Sigsbee's blindly devotional foresight had led him to shave and dress before retiring the night before. Ere any of the others could move, he had made a flying leap from the canoe to the nearest derelict, a crudely hollowed native dugout.

"I told you!" he flung back as he hauled in the dugout's mooring-stone. "Didn't I tell you I'd seen that girl before? *And I know where, now!* Just as I said. Everything absolutely all right, but you fellows—Never mind! *Coming, Miss Enid!*"

Oars splashed, and the dugout fairly shot across toward the landing stage.

Of those left on the canoe, Tellifer was the first to find voice.

"He has seen her before," said he solemnly. "Ah, yes! Her name is Miss Enid, she is an air-pilot, and these facts make everything absolutely all right. Naturally. But do you know, Alcot, despite my love for the beautiful and mysterious, I have had about enough of that pyramid? By all means, let Sig have it! I suggest that the rest of us go away now, while we are still able, and leave that pair in possession!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE STORY OF MISS ENID WIDDIUP

"IT IS so good in you all," the girl began, somewhat later in the day, when they were all seated together under the big canoe's awning, "so very good in you to understand and not blame me in the least for any of it. Of course, Mr. Sigsbee's remembering me helps. I am almost sure that I recall his face, too, though I drove so many officers back and forth to Camp Upton—Oh, you were 'just a sergeant' and I didn't drive you? Why, I drove lots of the non-coms and the boys, too. We all did. Well, if you couldn't get near my car, I'm sorry. There *was* a crowd—Oh, you were transferred to Georgia just after I began driving at Camp Upton? And then never got across? That *was* stupid. But I can sympathize with you fully. They wouldn't take me in the ambulance corps, because they said I was too young and not strong enough. Wasn't that absurd? I'm not so awfully large, of course, but my physical endurance is simply *endless*. But I must begin at the beginning and tell this properly.

"My father, as I have already told you, was Dr. Alexander Widdiup, the archaeologist, and I was born on the Amazon, in Manaos. Mother took me home to New York when I was a baby, and I never saw Brazil again till this summer.

"I was nine years old when poor Dad wrote us that he was planning a trip up the Rio Silencioso. An Indian had brought him word that at the Silencioso's source were some remarkable ruins and relics of an ancient people. This Indian—his name was Peter or—no, Petro, that was it—I beg pardon, Mr. Otway? Yes, his name was Kuyambira-Petro. Dad said he came from some cannibal tribe on the Moju river. He was a wizard, too, and made charms to protect people from jungle and river-demons. He showed Dad one of those jaguar tunics, and two small diamonds, cut to symbolize the sun. But the expedition my father organized, never came back.

"Dad had been with us in New York only part of each year, but he and I were best pals. I used to say to myself that some day, when I grew up, I'd find a way to at least learn how he died.

"Then the War came. Mother always lets me do about as I please, and I had learned to fly a Bleriot, but of course they wouldn't take me in the aviation corps, either. So finally I had to content myself with motor-car service at home. After peace was signed, poor Major Dupont agreed to help me in my scheme to reach the source of the Rio Silencioso by the air-route. Major Dupont was English—Royal Flying Corps—but he was visiting friends in New York on six months' leave. When I told him my plan he considered it very practical and interesting.

"We decided on the hydro-airplane because we had to rise from the Amazon, and over these forests if we couldn't come down on water we couldn't come down at all.

"Mother is at Manaos now, waiting for me. She is probably terribly worried, but still she knows that I always do get through safely somehow. I beg pardon? Oh, I inherit an adventurous disposition from father, and I don't think size and physical strength count for so much in these days. . . .

"Why, Mr. Waring! You mustn't say that! Why, I didn't mean that at all! You poor things, of course you couldn't help yourselves with that frightful beast threatening you every moment. But let me go on, and you'll understand better.

"Mother drew the line at my making this trip alone, but poor Major Dupont was so resourceful and had such a splendid flying record that when he offered, that made it much safer, of course. The Major and I only meant to make a reconnaisance flight this first trip, but we had no trouble in finding the lake. The top of the pyramid flashed its location to us miles off. Of course, we didn't know what the flash meant. It was like an enormous, bright star shining in broad daylight, and on earth instead of up in the sky where stars belong.

"Mr. Tellifer? A fallen star—yes, that was just what poor Major Dupont said it resembled. It is a little strange that he should have used that comparison, because of what was told to me later on.

"We planed down to the lake and landed in the collapsible boat we carried. There have been several heavy rains since, and our little craft must have filled and sunk. I notice it is not among the others. Major Dupont wished me to wait and let him go up the pyramid alone, but I wouldn't, so we went up together. It was noon, but of course we had no means of knowing that noon meant anything dangerous.

"We looked over the upper rim, and there was that strange hollow place, with palms and shrubbery and in the middle—something glorious. Major Dupont said it must be the grandfather of all diamonds, and we joked over it. We knew it was fearfully hot in the court, but it was hot outside, too. We walked over to the pit. Major Dupont said there must be a furnace below it. He stepped on one of the five-sided stones—By mere chance, I had one foot on the solid pavement and pulled myself back in time. I ran out on one of the oblong stones. The column I caught hold of was so hot it scorched my hands. I—I find I can't tell you much of this. . . . Thank you. Yes, I believe I'll just leave it out. I couldn't help him. There wasn't time. I—fainted, I think.

"Afterward, for a long while, everything was like a dream. My first memory is of looking up into the face of an old woman, very strangely dressed. I was lying on the floor of one of the outer houses. She had taken away my own clothes and dressed me like herself. This seemed a bit strange for a few minutes, and after that quite natural. I accepted everything just as one does in a dream. Some of the time I would even seem to know I was dreaming, and wonder a little why I couldn't wake up. I felt very sad always, though there didn't seem any real reason for it.

"I think it was the shock of what I had seen happen. There was a Miss Blair that mother and I knew. She was the dearest girl, but she had been at a hospital base in France when it was shelled by the Germans. For nearly a year afterward she wasn't herself at all. She cried a great deal, and couldn't take interest in anything. I used to bring her flowers, and when I called I noticed she would never do anything unless the nurse or I suggested she should. I suppose I was very much like that. . . .

"Why yes, Mr. Waring. If any of you had asked me to release you or told me to shut that hideous creature in its hole, I think I would have done it. When you all seemed so—so annoyed over what was happening, I used to wonder why you never asked me to do differently. But then, you were just people in a dream, and dream-people never do behave consistently, you know. So I went on acting as Sifa directed me, because that was easiest.

"The old woman's name was Sifa. She spoke English and some other language that meant nothing to me. Her teeth were nearly all gone, but very soon I grew used to the mumbling and the broken accent, and understood almost everything she said in English.

"I did whatever she advised me to. She didn't hurt me or even threaten. In fact, she was extremely considerate and—kind, I was going to say, but that hardly expresses it. Her face and eyes were too wicked. I followed her advice because she seemed to know exactly what I ought to do, and it was such an effort to think of things for myself. Besides,

it was all so dreamlike. Nothing mattered in the least.

"Sifa said that Ama-Hotu, Lord of Day, had sent me in a cloud-canoe from the skies, so that the ancient worship might not fail. She was the last of her people. Many seasons ago, a great sickness carried off all that were left of her race, the Ocllos. I can't tell you much of the Ocllo people's history. You see, though I understood what she said, I didn't feel like speaking at all to anyone, and I asked no questions.

"But Sifa, of her own accord, told me that a long time ago, at the beginning of all seasons, Ama-Hotu, Lord of Day, caused the great star Huac to descend upon the earth. Huac the Star was jealous of his honor. So Ama-Hotu commanded that Corya the great Earth Serpent with Feet, should give him worship in the dark hours, and that the sacred women dedicated to Ama-Hotu's service should also serve Huac the Star. By day, in return, Huac was servant to Ama-Hotu and presided over the offerings.

"Corya, the Serpent with Feet, had many children of which the Star was father.* For seasons beyond number the children of Corya and the Star dwelt together in the pyramid, and the sacred women of Ama-Hotu danced with them in worship of the Star and Sun. But a season came when Corya, the Earth Serpent devoured her children.

"Two of them were saved by one of the sacred women and carried to the surrounding land. Until that time the Ocllos, Sifa's people, had dwelt in great numbers on the land. The pyramid was a place of worship, and only the sacred dancing women dwelt here. But the pair of Corya's children multiplied. They would not harm the sacred women, whose music they loved, but they slew so many of the people that at last there were only a few left, and those came to dwell under protection of the dancers in the pyramid. They still grew crops along the shores, but for this the sacred ones must go ashore and protect them with music.

"There were so few of the Ocllo people left that the human offerings to Ama-Hotu could no longer be selected from their number. For many seasons, long before Sifa was born, it had been the custom to send secret emissaries who traveled upon water, which the children of Corya could not cross, and brought back victims from the outer tribes. Sometimes they would do this by force, but more often by tempting them with tales of wealth or whatever the victims most desired.

"Sifa said that after all her people died in a great sickness, she lived here many seasons alone. Sifa gave up trying to cultivate the fields on shore, and lived on fruits and nuts and fish from the lake.

"Corya, the great Earth Serpent, was content to be fed on the fruits of the Earth, her father. Flesh had never been offered to her. I suppose really they were afraid the horrible thing would acquire a taste for blood and turn on them. Corya's children ashore, by the way, had never grown to any great size—never more than eighteen inches or so. I think now that all that part was merely a legend, made up to account for the common centipedes one finds in the jungle, and that Corya herself was just an unaccountable freak.

"Sifa had obtained what victims she could to offer Ama-Hotu. In the old days, her people had many friends among the forest tribes, and this dreadful cannibal wizard, Kuyambira-Petro was one of them. She told me that sometimes Petro came to visit her. He believed that Huac the Star was greatest of all the *anyi* or spirits. *Tota Quarahy*, Life-Breath of the Sun, he called it. He brought it victims when he could to win its favor.

"I remembered the name—Petro—and it made me sad, so that I cried for hours after she had told me that. But I didn't remember my father or what I had come here for.

"She taught me to play on the little golden pipes and Corya came out of her lair. No, I wasn't afraid of the creature. I wasn't afraid of anything. I tell you, it was all just a dream to me.

"Sifa said that Corya would never harm me, because now I was a sacred woman. She danced with Corya to show me how I was to do. I have always been very fond of dancing, and I liked that part. It was the only thing that interested me, even a little.

"When I—woke up, at last, and found myself sitting there on the floor with you standing around me, I was terribly frightened. I knew for the first time that all those things I had been seeing and hearing and doing were real! And oh! I was *scared!* It was silly in me, but I was actually afraid you might be angry enough to kill me. Mr. Waring? Oh, I thought you spoke.

"So I jumped up and ran. When I reached that doorway, there was Sifa inside. She pulled the door shut and mumbled something at me, and I heard her bare feet go pattering down the stair. The stairway is wider than the door, you may remember. I just flattened myself tight to the wall inside the doorway. After you passed I ran back in the court and hid among the shrubbery.

"Before the night was over, I had collected my senses and decide the best thing I could do was to tell you I was sorry and go away. So I went down after my suit—Oh, yes, in the dark. Sifa never had any lights, but I had learned to know my way around without. No, certainly we didn't live down in that musty old vault. There are ever so many passages between the inner chambers of the pyramid and the funny little houses outside. We lived outside, of course. Sifa used to be always watching the river mouth in case more victims should come. I was with her when your canoe entered the lake. Sifa was watching you all the time. When you started up the stair, she sent me to call forth Corya, and directed me how to act toward you. I was to send Corya to her hole after a while, and beckon you to come down. But poor Mr. Tellifer, by falling in, changed that part, and rather confused me for a few minutes. . . .

"It didn't change things enough to hurt? N-no—oh, no, of course not. Really, if you *are* angry with me, I can't blame you in the least. . . You're not? It's so dear in you all to say so. And now I—I think I must go. Why, yes, thank you, I can handle the 'plane very nicely alone, and I couldn't think of imposing on you. Why, certainly I'm not angry! But—

"Well, so long as you put it that way, I'll wait, of course. Maybe a day or two of rest *would* make it safer. And I can show you all around the pyramid. After I've relieved mother's anxiety, I'm coming back here, of course. Oh, yes, I feel it's my duty. You see, poor Dad gave his life to find this place, and I must get the—the measurements, you know, and photographs of the carvings and all that. Then I shall give the notes and pictures and what I can remember of the Ocllo people's history to some archaeologist who understands such things, and he can write a book about it and give the credit to father.

"Mr. Otway? I'm so glad you think that's a splendid idea! And Mr. Waring, you say you write for the magazines. You won't spoil my book by telling about any of it in advance, will you?"

NOON. Ama-Hotu, Lord of Day, glared fiercely down upon Huac the Star's empty shrine and the drying corpse of Corya, the many-taloned Earth Serpent. Old Sifa, last devotee of the

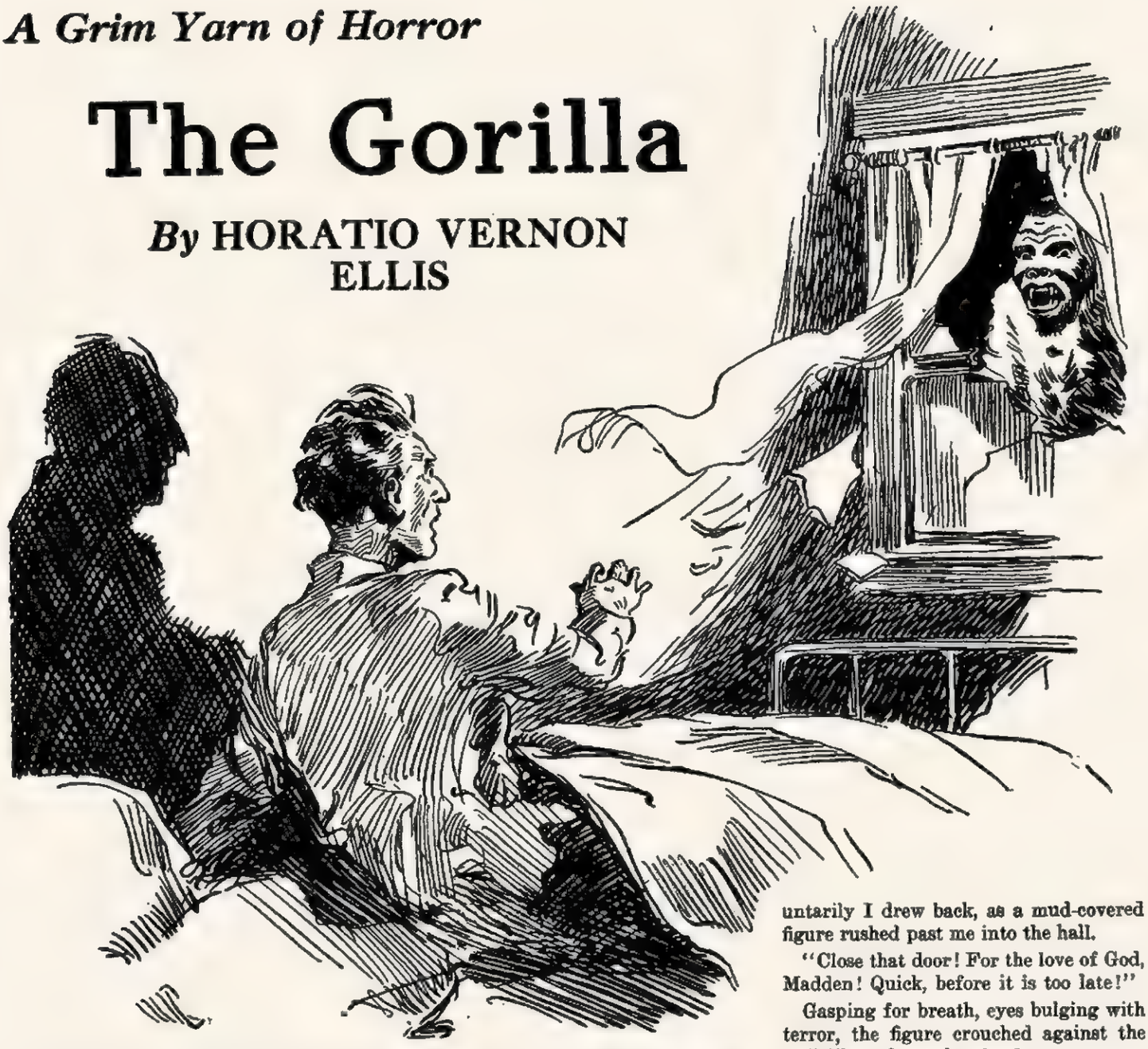
(Continued on page 90)

There is at least a question among the naturalists, as to whether that rather curious creature, CHILOPODA SCOLOPENDRA, finds it always necessary to mate in order that the species may be perpetuated.

A Grim Yarn of Horror

The Gorilla

By HORATIO VERNON ELLIS



IT WAS a night of storm. The streets were a mass of slime and slush. A beastly wind was blowing, and as I left the club it nearly took me off my feet. It was with considerable satisfaction, therefore, that I found a cheery log fire awaiting me in the library of my home.

"A bad night, sir," commented my servant as he helped me remove my soaking clothes and get into some dry ones.

"It certainly is, George—just listen to that wind howl—seems as though a thousand devils were abroad—doesn't it?"

"It does that, sir."

The wind shrieked around the cornice of the house. It died out with a long, low, wail, only to rise again with a greater fury than before.

A hot toddy at my elbow, I dismissed my man for the night and settled down before the fire to enjoy an hour or so of reading before retiring.

And now there came to my ears another sound. At first I thought it was only the wind. But as I heard it a second time I felt certain that it was a human voice calling. Laying aside the book I had been reading, I leaned forward in an effort to catch the sound again. Then suddenly, above the screech of the wind I heard my name called.

"Madden—Madden, for God's sake open the door!"

With a shriek of terror the voice trailed off in a high pitched wail that mingled with the howling wind.

Snatching my automatic from the mantel above the fire-place, I rushed to the hall door and flung it open. Involuntarily I drew back, as a mud-covered figure rushed past me into the hall.

"Close that door! For the love of God, Madden! Quick, before it is too late!"

Gasping for breath, eyes bulging with terror, the figure crouched against the wall like a hunted animal.

Closing and bolting the door, I turned and hastily scrutinized the man's face. Through the mud that covered his features I recognized Hapesworth Chadwick, collector of animals for the Wild Park Zoological Gardens.

"My God, Chadwick! What has happened?"

"Are you sure no one or—or—anything—can get in through that door?" he anxiously inquired, ignoring my question.

"Dynamite is about the only thing that will open that door from the outside," I assured him.

Seeming more at ease, he lifted a shaking hand and drew it across his face, wiping off some of the mud that stuck there. It was not until then that I noticed his attire. Clad in a suit of pa-

jamas that was soaked with rain and mud, his teeth chattering from the cold, he was a sorry looking object. Glancing down I noticed that his feet were bare.

I was almost tempted to laugh at his predicament, but a look of horror shone in his eyes and twisted his dirt-covered face into a horrible grimace.

Suppressing the numerous questions that I wanted to ask, I exclaimed:

"Lord! Chadwick, you must be almost frozen. Come into the library and sit by the fire until I can hunt you up something to wear that will be more comfortable than what you have on now."

A hot bath, warm clothes, a hot whisky and a good cigar helped dispel some of the fear that haunted him.

It seemed almost beyond reason that he, Hapesworth Chadwick, who had faced death times without number while hunting animals in the wildest parts of the African jungles, could be the same man sitting in front of me, who at every sound of the raging storm gave a nervous start and glance over his shoulder.

The slithering swish of the rain crept into the stillness of the room, rattling with ghostly fingers against the windows. A convulsive shudder shook my companion.

"Now, Chadwick, tell me—what is it all about?" I asked, trying to suppress the agitation in my voice.

As the sound of my voice broke the sudden stillness of the room, my friend gave a violent start, and almost rose up out of his chair.

"God! Madden, when I think of the horrible thing I saw back there in my room, my flesh crawls."

Lifting a trembling hand he drew it across his forehead, letting it rest a moment over his eyes as if to shut out some vision of horror.

There was a moment of silence. I could hear the wind as it went wailing through the trees.

With a tremendous effort my friend pulled himself together and began to talk:

"You remember that last trip I made to Africa? It was about two years ago, I guess. Well, as you know, I went after gorillas. The lot I had brought back the year before contracted some kind of disease and died. It was therefore up to me to get another supply of the beasts.

"On the sixth day we plunged into a thick swamp. The odor of decay and mold was sickening. As our progress led us deeper into that hell-hole, the air grew heavier. It smelt dead.

"Suddenly one of the bush-beaters up ahead of me gave a yell. There was a crashing of brush, and an old she-gorilla carrying a young one at its breast bore down upon us. Froth dripped from its mouth. On the instant I raised my rifle and fired. With a scream the beast slumped to the ground, the young one tightly clutched to its breast.

"As two of the native boys were trying to get the young one out of the grip of the mother's powerful arms, I made the discovery that my bullet had only grazed the side of the brute's head, and instead of being dead it was only senseless. At last we managed to get the little one free and by rare good fortune we also succeeded in getting the mother back to camp before she regained consciousness.

"In the days that followed we obtained quite a collection of the smaller animals. The old one by this time had recovered from the wound on the side of her head where my bullet had creased her. As the wound healed it left a long scar that ran from the side of the mouth straight back above the left ear.

"I had kept the little one away from its mother, and we became quite chummy. One day I took it into my hut and let it out of the cage to see what it would do. As I stood watching its foolish antics, I heard excited shouts coming from the native guides outside. Forgetting about the little one, I rushed out, leaving the door open. When I came back the young gorilla was gone. Glancing through the door, I saw it running toward the cage that held its mother.

"With a bound I was after it, I caught it just as it came up to the cage. As I clutched the little fellow, the mother let out a roar of rage and began tearing at the bars of her cage in a wild frenzy to reach me. As the howls of its mother increased in volume it started to scratch and bite like a little devil, in an effort to get away. Intending to choke it into insensibility I grasped it by the throat. I must have held it in my grip too long, for when I dropped it to the ground it was dead.

"The mother seemed to sense what I had done. She stopped her attempt to break loose. Settling back on her haunches she uttered a screech that made my blood run cold. As I looked at her there in her cage her eyes seemed to burn into mine. I could almost feel the hatred that smoldered in them. Low guttural sounds of agony issued from the thick hairy throat. Froth, thick and stringy, dripped from the mouth onto the broad breast.

Turning on my heel I strode back to my hut. All that night I had terrible dreams that always had the same end—I was struggling in the arms of a bestial gorilla that was ever trying to tear my throat open with its yellow tusks.

"The next morning her cage was open and she was gone. How the cage had been opened I do not know, nor was I ever able to find out. But the old gorilla had vanished and had taken her dead with her."

The man sat there, gazing into the flames. I listened to the rain tap-tap-tapping, like skeleton fingers on the window pane.

My friend looked up.

"I then dismissed the whole thing from my mind. I would never have given it another thought but for what happened yesterday, when I chanced to drop into the menagerie tent of a circus. You can believe me or not, Madden, but when I came out of the tent I was trembling with fear. A wild impulse to run gripped me as a long drawn, eerie cry floated to me on the wind.

"In one of the cages in that tent was the same animal that had escaped from me in the jungles of Africa!"

A high-pitched scream, that seemed a part, yet independent, of the wind caused my friend's face to turn an ashen gray.

"What was that, Madden? Did you hear? Good God!"

Trembling, he sank deeper into his chair, as though to hide from the invisible terror that haunted him.

"It was only the wind," I told him in an assuring tone, although in my own heart I was not sure whether it was or not. "You were saying?"

"Oh! yes—let's see—. Where was I?"

Like a man in a trance he seemed searching his mind to gather together the loose ends of a shattered thought.

"Oh! yes—now I remember. After leaving the circus tent I went direct to my rooms. I had a feeling of impending doom. Try as I would I could not shake it off. That cry I had heard was still ringing in my ears when I climbed into my bath. I felt considerably better after the plunge, so, picking up a book I threw myself on the bed and began to read. It was still daylight when I lay down, therefore I had no need of lights.

"I must have fallen asleep, for with a start I found myself sitting up in bed. The darkness seemed so thick that you could cut it with a knife. Once more that feeling of doom possessed me. Cold beads of perspiration covered my forehead. I brushed a hand across my face. It was wet and clammy. Death seemed reaching out its bony hands to clutch me by the throat. The next instant my blood froze with terror, for out of the night there came to me, lying there in the inky blackness of my room, a long drawn animal-like cry. Springing from bed I switched on the lights. As I stood

there listening I could hear my heart beating a tattoo against my ribs.

"I slept no more that night. At the slightest sound a cold sweat would break out over my entire body. How I passed the night without losing my mind, God only knows."

The speaker paused. His face was chalky. He buried his face in his hands, shuddering, while I rose and threw another log on the fire.

Outside, the wind still howled, monotonously, eerily. Then came my friend's voice again, dead, cold.

"With the first faint streak of dawn I was dressed. As I walked out of the house I felt like a craven coward, afraid of the shadows that still lurked in the fence corners. By walking I thought I could throw off the feeling that still had hold of me. All day I walked, never stopping once to get a bite to eat, for my one impulse was to get away from the haunting fear that possessed me. When at last, towards evening, I stopped to get my bearings, I found by some trick of fate I was standing within a stone's throw of the tent that held the thing I feared. What made me go to take another look at the hideous brute, I do not know, but I bought a ticket and went in.

"As I came within sight of its cage, I could feel the blood drain from my face. I shook from head to foot. The cage was empty! With a voice that shook I asked one of the attendants what had become of the beast that had occupied the cage the day before. He informed me that it had escaped that night. Glancing back at the cage I noticed the iron bars had been twisted and bent like so much lead wire. Then it dawned on me that it had made its escape the same night that I had been awakened by the cry that had almost driven me mad.

"Numb with terror I left the tent. It was just getting dark when I let myself into my rooms. Switching on the lights I pulled down the blinds, and after locking the door I felt in a small way secure. Tired, weary and foot-sore from my day of aimless wandering I disrobed and lay on the bed, too fatigued to pull down the covers and crawl beneath them. I did not switch off the lights, for I was afraid I would go mad if I could not see everything in the room.

"I soon fell into a fitful sleep. How long I slept I do not know. A crash as of breaking glass awoke me. On the instant I was out of bed and on my feet in the middle of the room. My eyes were blinded for an instant by the sudden flare of the lights that I had left burning. As I stood there blinking I was conscious of a peculiar scraping sound. As my eyes grew accustomed to the light, my gaze wandered to the window. Framed in the broken window was the huge hairy head of a gorilla! One hand was stretched out toward me as if to grasp me by the throat. The lips curled back over the yellow teeth with a throaty snarl. Thick foam dripped from the mouth covering the beast's breast! With a sudden lunge the thing lurched forward, dragging its shoulders through the opening. The light shining on the side of the brute's head, revealed a long scar running from the corner of its mouth straight back over the left ear. My blood surged through my veins like fire. Something in my brain snapped. With a scream I turned and tore open the door, fled down the stairs, and out into the night!

"The rest, Madden, you know as well as I do. What possessed me to come here, God only knows! I only know I ran. God, how I ran! My only thought was to get away from the horrible thing back in my room, and—and—Madden, I'm afraid—afraid!"

My companion shuddered. The firelight shone on his face, which seemed grown suddenly old and haggard. I reached for the bottle of brandy that stood on the table. A peculiar prickling sensation ran along the roots of my hair. Pouring out a stiff bracer I handed it to him, saying:

"Here, drink this and brace up. It may not be as bad as it looks."

My attempt at cheerfulness fell short, for the story my friend had just told, combined with the swish of the rain, was getting on my nerves.

He drank the brandy with a gulp. Taking a stiff nip myself, I turned to him and said:

"Now look here, Chadwick! What you need is a good night's rest. I'll put you up in the spare room for it must be pretty late. Come on, and I'll show you where the room is."

As I finished speaking, the clock in the hall struck two. With a lurch Chadwick rose to his feet.

'All right, Madden. I hope you're right, but somehow I feel like the oriental who said, 'Who can escape his fate'."

"Forget it. Nothing can harm you here. It would take a half dozen gorillas to get into the room I am going to put you into," I replied.

Staggering like a man intoxicated, he followed me to his room, which was situated back of the library, my own being on the floor above, directly over his. I had brought the automatic with me from the library. Switching on the lights, I laid it on the chiffonier, remarking as I did so:

"There, Chadwick; that's more than a match for a dozen animals, no matter what they are."

Giving him the key to the door, so that he could lock himself in if he wished I bade him good-night. As I mounted the stairs to my own room I heard his key grate in the lock.

It was not long from the time I entered my room until I was in bed and asleep. How long I had slept I cannot say. I was brought to my waking senses by what I thought was the report of a gun. Thinking that I had probably been dreaming, I sat up in bed and listened.

Outside, the wind still howled and shrieked, driving the rain against the window in torrents. The inky blackness was punctured now and then by the flashing of lightning. Silence so deep greeted me that my ear-drums hummed. Deciding that I had been dreaming I was about to lie down, when a scream echoed and re-echoed through the house, and brought me out of bed with a bound. Following the scream there rang out two gun shots.

Rushing out into the hall, I dashed down the stairs. The sound of violent struggling reached my ears as I missed the last two steps at the bottom of the stairs and went sprawling to the floor in the dark. Quickly regaining my feet, I rushed toward my friend's room, whence the sound of the struggling came. As I reached the door, a shriek of mortal agony rang out, that seemed to freeze the blood in my veins. With a rush I sprang against the door in an effort to force it open. Failing in the first attempt I drew back for another rush just as another shot rang out. Terror-stricken, I flew at the door, beating upon the stout oaken panels with my bare fists, shouting:

"Chadwick—Chad—for God's sake open the door!—Chad—"

For a moment I listened. The streak of yellow that filtered through the crack beneath the door told me that his light was still burning. A peculiar scraping sound greeted my straining ears, followed by the impact of a falling body. On the instant the hall where I stood was flooded with light. Whirling, I confronted my servant standing back of me in his night clothes. His teeth were chattering, and his face was chalky white.

"Wha—wha—what is the matter, sir?" he asked.

"I don't know yet. Help me open this door," I quickly answered.

Using our combined weights, we succeeded, after what seemed an eternity, in

(Continued on page 94)

A True Story of Oriental Mysticism

THE TALISMAN

By NADIA LAVROVA

ONE of the strangest incidents of my life happened two short years ago in Japan. I am writing it down just as it took place and withhold all comments, as I really can advance no logical explanation whatever of the whole chain of events.

During the summer of 1920 I had spent a very pleasing vacation in Kamakura, that beautiful sea resort some fifteen miles from Yokohama, famed throughout the Far East.

In company with two girl friends, I had taken a tiny little house not three minutes' walk from the golden beach.

And when, in the morning, we hastily donned native kimonos over our one-piece bathing suits and made a dash for the first plunge in the waters of the Pacific, we three lazy girls knew that by the time we came home our little house would be in perfect order and steaming hot coffee await us in Satsuma cups.

The ten fairy little fingers who did all our housework belonged to our pretty Japanese maid—Ine San.

That girl had taken a special liking to me. I don't know why, unless it was because I used to listen for hours at a time when she unfolded to me all the secrets of the weird Japanese superstitions.

My two friends used to smile condescendingly, when, squatting on the mats in Ine San's room I was becoming initiated into all the mysterious doings of the two-tailed cats and spirits of foxes who choose bodies of beautiful young girls for their permanent abode.

Sometimes, when the scoffers departed, I was granted a special favor. Ine San would take from a cupboard with sliding panels an ancient lacquered box. This was reverently placed on a silk handkerchief and ceremoniously opened. In that box were preserved amulets and charms against all evils that flesh is heir to.

Ine San could not know that all the time I was simply making a comparative study of Chinese and Japanese folk-lore, which is a very difficult thing for a white person to do, since one has first to gain the fullest confidence of one's yellow friend. She cherished the idea that she was converting me to her beliefs.

In September my vacation ended. With a regretful sigh, I bid good-bye to Kamakura, the tiny doll-house and Ine San, and returned to my regular work in Yokohama.

I was employed on the staff of a foreign paper, being pretty much occupied during the greater part of the day, though as a special favor I was allowed to do part of the non-rush work at home.

My "home" consisted of a nice comfortable room of a boarding-house situated on the Bluff, the residential quarter of Yokohama. The place was built on an English plan with all modern conveniences, but somehow I missed very much my inconvenient little Japanese house where I had spent such a delightful summer.

One rainy morning in the end of November I was awakened by a scratch at my bed-room door. I looked at my watch. It showed half past six. Who the dickens—

The scratch, the Japanese idea of a polite knock, was repeated, and the silvery voice of Ine San begged leave to enter.

She came in, clad in a mourning kimono of lotus-white crepe with untrimmed edges that proclaimed the death of a near relative.

After the first greetings in pretty good English (she had lived in American families out in the Orient most of her life), Ine San stated the object of her visit.

"I come say goo'-bye," she said. "My father's father he all dead and now family have velly long mourning. I go velly velly far—our village, must go three days and then say many prayers. I no come back long time."

I was genuinely sorry to see her go and wished her every possible happiness.

"Miss Lavrova, you always so kind to me," continued Ine San. "You no laugh Japanese believings. I bling you velly seclet and happy thing."

Saying this, she put on my coverlet a delicate mesh bag filled with about a hundred lilliput micans, a kind of Japanese orange. These were so small that a silver dollar would have made a fitting dish for any of them.

I began thanking her for the delicious present when I saw that I had been guilty of a misunderstanding.

Out of the folds of her kimono Ine San had extricated a tiny something carefully wrapped in a piece of white rice-paper. Red and gold characters were drawn on it by means of a brush.

Reverently. Ine San undid the wrapping and I beheld a small chip of some rare wood rather oddly shaped. It was neither polished nor painted.

Several hieroglyphs were burned on one side of it, and even I, with my poor knowledge of Japanese, immediately saw that they were in the ancient language used in Nippon somewhere around the tenth or twelfth century.

"Oh, what have you got there, Ine San?" I exclaimed with interest.

"Velly good and strong charm, Missie, and save you life quite surely."

She began her long and rambling explanations and I, sitting up in bed, listened patiently.

It appeared that this talisman, for such it happened to be, was endowed with great mysterious powers. Sold for a few cents at an obscure ancient temple somewhere south of Tokyo, it could be secured only by a personal application to the priests.

Certainly it was never destined to fall into the impious hands of a white person such as myself. And only the fondness my little Japanese friend bore me could have made such an unlikely event possible.

"And what does the charm protect from?" I asked Ine San, not wanting to hurt her feelings and desirous to keep up an interest in the thing. Anyway, I reflected, it would do very nicely for my little curio collection.

"Him saves life, Missie," repeated Ine San. "You going get killed. You got that holy thing. You no get hurt and charm all break."

This was something new. I had never heard of such a talisman before, so I began asking questions.

Yet I elicited nothing much except what Ine San had already stated. The

piece of wood was to be carefully preserved. The best way was to sew it inside a garment you wore most often. Then, if anything threatened your bodily welfare, mysterious forces would protect you. As a sign of danger averted, you would find the talisman split in two through the middle even if nothing had touched it. The hieroglyphs were an ancient exorcism to ward off evil.

As soon as you found the talisman broken, however, you were immediately to wrap it in a piece of clean paper and drop it into flowing water lest dire misfortune overtake you and the house you lived in.

The thing seemed really too childish. But I wouldn't for worlds have made light of Ine San's beliefs.

"Have you ever seen it work, Ine?" I asked rather sleepily. It was so early, and I had been up late the evening before.

"Oh, missee!" she exclaimed in a hurt tone; "all our people knows this saving holy thing. My family all keep it."

It developed further that a neighbor's daughter had been lifted just in time out of a pond into which she had tumbled. Also a distant cousin had been miraculously left uninjured during a railway accident. Needless to say, both carried the charm. It sounded particularly unconvincing, and in my heart I pitied poor little Ine San for taking her knickknacks so seriously.

Finally she got up, and, proffering several ceremonious bows, bade me good-bye. The door closed and I cuddled up in bed for half an hour's sleep.

When, two hours later, I dashed up to my room for a forgotten handkerchief, I perceived the charm neatly wrapped in its white covering, lying on my night-table. Grabbing it, I dropped it into the spacious pocket of my blue tailormade.

"The garment I wear 'most often,' I chuckled. "With the money I am receiving now, it will probably be the only dependable thing in my wardrobe."

At dinner that night I boasted of my new acquisition to the boarders, among whom there were collectors of Japanese curios. None of the foreigners had seen just such a charm, though they were familiar with dozens of others. Most of the guests began to tease, calling out to Bert never to invite me out with him any more, as I was now fully protected against evil influences.

Amidst laughter and jokes, I stuffed the charm carelessly back into my pocket. Lifting up my head, unaware, I perceived the dark eyes of Mitsu San, the amah, fixed upon me. I thought I read astonishment in that glance, and then reproof, even resentment.

But while I was still looking she turned away and began stolidly to wipe a plate. I comforted myself with the thought that the strange expression of her eyes was only a trick my imagination had played me.

ABOUT ten uneventful days had passed when, on a foggy afternoon, I returned home from my office earlier than usual.

Under my left arm was tucked a large package of newspapers—the latest mail from England and the United States.

The paper I worked on was especially interested in the newest developments in Siberia, and I had been given the assignment to gather up all the current news in the papers and to make it up into a short and concise article. This kind of work I always used to do at home far from the bustle of the editorial office.

After Mitsu San had finished "makee fire" in my grate and withdrew, I curled up on my favorite settee, laid out the papers, a memorandum-pad, a red pencil and a fountain pen all around me and set to work.

The room was warm and cosy, the flames in the fire-place danced merrily, and sometimes I could even hear the distant clatter of teaspoons from the far-off dining-room.

The settee was my favorite corner for rest as well as work when I was at home.

The former owner of the house, an Englishman, had fixed just above it a large and heavy row of shelves artistically carved out of good solid English oak. They contained dozens of volumes of standard authors and some of the newest Anglo-American novels. On top of the shelves were several fine ancient bronzes.

Soon I was deeply engrossed in an article dealing with the Japanese attitude in Siberia—just the thing I had been looking for—and was busily making notes.

I now come to the incident I find most difficult to describe.

All at once, without any reason whatsoever, I sprang up in feverish haste from the settee, scattering the papers in all directions. I just flew across the room and found myself near the opposite wall before I had time to consider what I was doing—and why. It was as if some superior will had thrown me out of my seat and precipitated me across the room.

My memorandum-book was still in my hand as I halted before the wall.

"What in the world—" I began saying to myself, full of astonishment, when I heard a dull heavy thud behind me.

Whirling around, I beheld a sight that left me breathless:

The weight of that oak set of shelves had proved too much for the several nails on which it had been hanging for some years. The nails had been wrenched from their sockets, and shelves, books, bronzes and all, weighing no less than some 400 pounds had been hurled on the settee at the exact place where I had been sitting several seconds before.

I would have been simply wiped out if that terrible avalanche had descended upon my head!

The room was quiet and cheery once more. The distant clatter of spoons could still be heard from afar. Yet the Angel of Death had passed through that room, and I had sensed the flutter of its wings.

When the full realization of the danger I had just miraculously escaped came to me, I sank weakly into a chair.

Of course the whole boarding-house, servants and all, flocked to my room to view the disaster. And it took two strong men, not to mention Mitsu San, to lift and fix up those shelves.

The rest of that evening I neglected my work. I was in no mood for it and went early to bed.

About four in the morning I awoke and found that even in my sleep I had been thinking of last night's happening.

There was something unexplainable about it. Why had I jumped out of my seat barely three seconds before?

And all at once I remembered Ine San's charm.

A cold little shiver prickled through the roots of my hair. What had that small piece of wood to do with it? And yet—

I wondered. And wanted passionately to find out.

Sure enough, I had my blue tailormade on when the accident had occurred. And later, when I undressed, I had hung it outside the door for Mitsu San to brush in the morning. And that talisman had reposed forgotten in the pocket of the blue tailor-made since that day Ine San had given it to me.

Well, I would find out in the morning. If the charm had really split in two, why—it would be rather uncomfortable, to say the least.

(Continued on page 92)

A Spook Story of Sprightly Adventure

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BLUE GHOST

By DON MARK LEMON

THIS is a message from the Beyond, sketching my brief experience as a blue ghost, and nowhere have I dyed any of the plain sober gray stuff of actual events in the bright hues of my own vivid imagination, for I hold that those things which are set down exactly as they took place are the most valuable of human transcriptions. They leave the mind free to judge for itself, without prejudice or bias, except its own prejudice and bias, which is the highest freedom and truth.

Names, dates, events, herein are all genuine, and my tombstone in Greenwood Cemetery is a silent yet sure witness that I died. A bill of seventeen dollars and eighty cents still standing against the stone testifies that, though dead, my credit yet lives. And that I am alive as a ghost can not be disputed by any reasonable mind, since there are things set down here too ghostly to have been set down by any hand but that of a ghost. I leave it to an unprejudiced jury of six men and six ghosts.

Enter at the main gate of Greenwood Cemetery, pace off fifty-four steps to the north, turn west seven steps, vault the fence here and pace twenty steps north, and read on my tombstone

"Sacred to the memory of
Robert Jay Tuffley
Born April first, 1880
Died April first, 1919
Rest in peace."

But I didn't rest in peace very long, for the ghost of a man named Edwin X. Benjamin came along shortly after my funeral, and almost on the heels of my last mourner, a little tailor from lower Fifth Street, and kicking with his ghostly feet on my brand-new tombstone shouted for me to "come out of it" and pay him the ten dollars that I had honestly forgotten I owed him.

Besides, he didn't need the money, while several others to whom I honestly owed more than ten dollars did need their money. I called back for him to fetch me out of it, for it was the first time I had died in quite a while and I couldn't recall just how to resurrect myself from the papier mache coffin in which my loving friends had buried me, and I was afraid unless I was very careful that I might resurrect myself wrong and there would be the devil to pay.

He shouted down some directions, which I followed, and soon my ghost was standing beside Benjamin's ghost. He was a blue ghost too, only bluer than myself, and looked kind of fuzzy around the edges, like a raveled ghost, but more like a hazy transparent silhouette of his former self. I could look right through him and see several tombstones beyond.

I stared about the quiet graveyard, then exclaimed: "Why, I'm not dead! This isn't hell!"

The ghost of Benjamin, that I will call Ben for brevity's sake, gave a short nasty laugh, as he replied: "No, not yet; *you* haven't been here long enough."

I felt quite weak, being only just born as a ghost, and taking a few steps I sat down on a stone and stared at a tombstone. Suddenly I gave a gasp, for on the tombstone were the words:

"Ching Lung Hi
Born January ninth, 1882
Died July seventh, 1916"

"It's a Chinaman's grave!" I yelled. "And my grave next door to it!"

Ben yawned. "Sure! This is the Chinese addition to Greenwood."

"There's going to be a lawsuit over burying me in a chink graveyard," I scowled.

"There was a lawsuit," said Ben. "The Chinese company who owns this section of the cemetery got a judgment of two hundred dollars and costs against your undertaker for burying you here."

I looked hard at Ben and saw he meant it, so I decided to drop my lawsuit and start something else rolling to bring me in a few dollars.

"How did you get here?" I asked Ben, looking about and seeing no Ford, and wishing for something on wheels that would spare me the trouble of traveling afoot, for I did not propose to spend the balance of my ghostly existence in a Chinese graveyard.

Ben brought a hazy-looking bicycle from behind a tombstone. "On my bike, of course."

"Can a ghost ride a bike?" I asked.

"Ghost bikes," replied Ben. "This is the mechanical ghost of my old bike, and it's all right except its make and action and a puncture in the back tire. I was coming across the path there when I punctured it on the tooth of a dead Chinaman that had worked out of the ground. Just my blame blue luck!"

For twenty years, while alive as boy and man, Ben had ridden the same bike, with a racing saddle about the size of a parcel post stamp, and now his ghost was riding the ghost of that bike. This is what I would call habit wedded to economy, but flirting with parsimony.

"Any room for me on the handle bars?" I asked.

Ben looked hurt and, getting on the bike, started off. I ran after him and begged him to give me a few tips about ghostland, to put me wise to the tricks that are ghostly and the wiles that are beyond the grave.

"Anyway, tell me, am I here to stay?" I asked.

"Did you bring your nerve along?" he demanded.

"Sure," I replied.

"Then, we'll never shake you." With this, he rode away and left my young ghost standing in the center of that Chinese graveyard.

I was a blue ghost, and I felt it. I looked myself over and found I was blame poor stuff. I stuck a finger through myself sideways and pulled it out, and nothing came out of myself but my finger. It didn't hurt either, except for a brief pain in my finger. All there was to me was a kind of hazy blue outline and the consciousness of my identity as Robert Jay Tuffley. I seemed to be just identity—just Bob

Tuffley, and that hazy blue outline, which didn't much matter.

I considered: "Well, identity is all we are, anyway, unless one has personality, and that is just a little more of the same stuff as identity, only more troublesome so. As long as I have my identity what's the difference about my shape. It would be unpleasant to have just shape and no identity, like a stout, unconscious lady, or a balloon."

I sat down on a gravestone to grow a bit, for I was but a few minutes old.

"Confound Ben!" I meditated. "Why couldn't he have waited and introduced me in decent ghostly society? Perhaps he didn't know of any and was ashamed to introduce me to his ghost friends. He never reformed while alive as a man, why should he have reformed after he was dead and a ghost?

"Chong ching! chong lo!"

"Chuck! Muck a chuck!"

"Hi!"

I looked about me in some alarm, then my blue outline began to creep with a ghostly fear. For seven yellow ghosts came up from the grave where I was seated and squatted about me in a circle. These were not mere outline ghosts, either, like myself, but must have been older ghosts that had taken on substance and solidity with the ghostly years. But what substance! A kind of thick flaccid, yellow quivering gelatine that made me want to yell every time they moved and shook themselves, like soft custards or semi-liquefied frogs.

"What do want with me?" I asked.

"All same we wash your laundry when we were live Chinamen," replied the fattest ghost.

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "So you are some of my old Chinese laundrymen who did up my shirts. Well, boys, I'm glad to see you. I was just coming around to pay you, when I dropped dead."

"Hi! we glad to see you too," said the same fat custard. "Now we cut your blame ghost throat!"

"How did you get that way!" I gasped. "I never harmed you!"

"All same you kill all of us," replied the leanest ghost. "You make us seven blame stiffs!"

"Oh, come on boys," I protested. "You've got the wrong Tuffley. I'm Bob Tuffley—Bob J. You remember me now! How's your copperasity segasigating?" I assumed a cheerfulness that I scarcely felt, for I could see that they proposed to do me out of my young, innocent ghostly life.

"All same we know you," nodded the fattest Chinaman. "All same we wash your blame shirts, and every time one of us wash one of your blame shirts one of us die and go damned!"

"What you die from, boys?" I asked.

"All same your shirts!" they cried. "And now you dead! Did you wash one of your blame shirts, too?"

"No, I never washed one of my shirts," I replied.

"But you wear them," said the leanest ghost.

"Sure!"

"Then that's why you dead and damned too," nodded the spokes-spook.

This seemed to settle in their minds that the washing of my shirts had caused their deaths, and they held an argument as to which one should cut my innocent young throat.

"If it's too difficult for you to decide which one must be the unfortunate party to do the deed, I'll do it myself," I suggested. I had concluded, since I could stick my finger through myself with little unpleasant effect, that I could cut my own throat and not greatly mind.

"We no need help," said one of the yellow custards. "Each of us just crazy to cut your blame throat."

"Say, what was the matter with those shirts of mine that you washed?" I demanded.

"We don't know," they replied unanimously. "We just die in convulsions few minutes after we wash them."

At last a ghost was selected to cut my throat, and he did the job neatly and with dispatch,with a ghostly hatchet that he drew from his ghostly sleeve. But the act scarcely disturbed my bluish outline, and that only for a moment, then the severed parts closed a little fuzzily but securely. My identity was as good as ever, for nothing seemed to trouble my identity.

I was just as sure of myself as I had always been, boy, man or ghost. Without boating, I may say that I have the most fixed, concentrated identity that I have ever met. Positively rigid.

I now seemed properly initiated into the world of ghosts, for the seven yellow gelatine Chinese ghosts sank back into their grave. I immediately rose and hurried from the cemetery, as a locality unsuited for a young ghost with all ghostland before him, and with an ambition to be a whale of a ghost, with no ghost Jonah inside of him.

I had scarcely left the cemetery when I came on Ben's ghost seated on a rock, swearing at his bicycle. The rear tire had received another puncture.

"Just my blame blue luck!" growled Ben. "It it was raining roof tacks I'd be out on my bike with new racing tires, and the other fellow would be out on a steam roller."

I laughed. "Come, chuck the bike and let's go somewhere that's more exciting."

"Go to hell!"

"Is it exciting?" I asked.

"No, it's deadly tiresome. That's why it's hell."

"Not for me, then! I want something as different from the tedious as rheumatism is from 'rithmetic. What do you say we go to a world where their present is our future, then we'll see what's coming to us."

"I don't want to see what's coming to me," growled Ben. "I've trouble enough now."

"Maybe there's good coming to you," I suggested.

"Then somebody will change the address on the way to me," retorted Ben's ghost. "Or somebody's goat will eat the tag off. But if it's trouble, it's got my address blown in it, and I'll have to pay the freight besides."

"What's that!" I exclaimed, as I heard a voice singing *Annie Laurie* not a rod away, yet could not see so much as a ghost.

"That's Calloway's ghost," Ben informed me. "Calloway lived so pure a life that there was nothing of him to resurrect but song."

"Why is he hanging so closely around the cemetery?" I asked.

"He doesn't seem quite satisfied with being so pure," replied Ben. "He thinks that perhaps he can resurrect a little more of himself than song. Just enough for the lady ghosts to see, for he's very fond of lady ghosts, particularly the athletic; but they want something more definite than song in a gent ghost."

I looked myself over and saw little to take out a patent, copyright, or trade mark on. "What's the difference between a male and female ghost?" I demanded. "I'm nothing but outline and identity anyway."

"Just identity," replied Ben. "That is, with blue ghosts. With green or pink ghosts, or any other color of ghosts than blue, there is a greater distinction than mere outline and identity between the feminine and masculine, but with blue ghosts the distinction lies wholly in the identity. Blue ghosts are the lowest form of ghosts, and it's just my blame blue luck to be compelled to be a blame blue ghost, and have no distinction between myself and an old woman ghost but just my blame blue identity."

"How big is ghostland?" I inquired.

"To hell and back," replied Ben. "There's no limit to the ghost worlds, but there's a limit of a million miles an hour to blue ghosts."

"Great Scott!" I exclaimed. "If I can go a million miles an hour, I will soon have been everywhere and back again."

"I said there's a limit of a million miles an hour, not that you could make a million miles an hour," explained Ben. "You'll need to grow a few days before you can make half that."

"Will I be traveling a half million miles an hour in a few days?" I demanded.

"Perhaps," nodded Ben. "If some ghost sting-ray doesn't meet you and lay her eggs in your neck to hatch out."

I laughed. "That must be a ghost-boil! But I'd believe more of that if I knew less of you."

It angered Ben to be called a prevaricator to his face. "Have it your own fool way," he said. "You'll be lucky if the sting-ray doesn't bore a hole in your identity and lay her eggs there. Only I'd be sorry for the little sting-rays that had to be hatched in your identity."

"What's the most fun a blue ghost can have for nothing?" I asked, for I had just that much in my pocket, but no pocket as yet.

"Roll on the grass and get the ghost hives," replied Ben.

"What are the ghost hives good for?"

"To scratch."

"Is it a pleasure to scratch the ghost hives?"

"The only fun a blue ghost can have is to scratch his hives," replied Ben. "Now, aren't you sorry you died?"

"I couldn't help it," I said. "I was shot."

"But you shouldn't have taken that cow," said Ben.

"Hello! what have we here?" I cried. In another moment I started to run, and not ask any more questions, for I had recognized the thing before me as just a big ghostly human hand, seven feet high, and it was reaching for me. If it should close on my poor ghost it would squeeze the very identity out of it.

"Help!" I cried, for the big hand had got me and was squeesing my outline into the shape of a disappointed cruller. But it seemed that nothing could squeeze my identity into any other shape that it was, for it was too rigid.

After the hand had squeezed my outline from all ghostly semblance to a man, it threw me aside and moved on, walking on its fingers, toward the cemetery. I watched it till it was hidden by the tombstones, then I arose on one end of my damaged outline and soon had worked myself back into my former shape, and felt no worse for my amazing experience. My identity seemed even more rigid than ever.

"Was that the ghost of a glad hand?" I asked.

"No, that was the ghost of a milkman," replied Ben. "He milked twenty cows before breakfast for seventeen years, and died suddenly one morning from water on the brain, and now he goes about milking every blue ghost he comes across, and we blame blue ghosts have to stand for it, for blue ghosts have to stand for everything."

"Where was the rest of him?" I asked.

"There isn't any rest of him. He is all hand. Ghostland is ful of ghosts that now are all what they were most of while alive as men and women. There are ghosts that are all ears, or nose, or necktie, or haircut. You want to look out for the ghost that's all gall. If he ever spreads himself over you, even *your* identity will be slightly fussed."

Just then a pair of large, bare, very clean, very pink feet hurried by, each about a yard high, and I watched them until they had hurried over the hill, then I sat down and whistled.

"Great Scott!" I laughed. "That must have been the ghost of H. Hurry Scott. He always was in a hurry about something."

"That's Scott's ghost," nodded Ben. "He died in a hurricane.

"From hurry to hurry he hurried himself to hurry out of debt. And but he hurried into a hurricane. He had been hurrying yet."

"I must be half an hour old," I considered. "I guess my crust should be hard enough by now for me to roll onward. Believe me, Ben, I had some crust before I became a ghost."

"I'll go along with you a little ways," Ben offered, pushing his bike along beside me. "There's a ghost dog down the road that always rushes out and bites me in my outline, and he may want a change of outline."

"If he comes after me, I'll change *his* outline," I laughed. "Say, Ben, do you know of any rich young ghost girl—I mean wealthy, for all girls are rich—who might be willing to marry a handsome blue ghost an hour old?"

"There's a wealthy ghost girl down the road a ways, but she's not very young," replied Ben.

"How old is she—a month?"

"She became a ghost girl the year that Helen was carried off to Troy by Paris. But you'd never guess her age from her looks."

"Now for her looks," I said, holding my ghostly breath.

"She's a triangle, with one blind eye in the center of the triangle."

I waved the temptation to sudden riches aside. "I'd rather work and change jobs so often that it wouldn't seem like real work. But I say, Ben, what makes your bike rattle so?"

"That's the dead Chinaman's tooth, that punctured the tire and got inside. If there was only one dead Chinaman in all the world, and he had only one tooth, that tooth would have worked up out of his coffin and punctured *my* tire. That's just my blame blue luck."

"But I say, Ben, I thought ghostland was a dim, haunted place, inhabited with ghastly spooters and grisly shapes, and your hair stood on end without any vaseline, and a clammy sweat froze your B. V. D's. to your funked back bone, and your middle name was fear! Then Horror blew out the last candle and you were alone with—"

"With what?" asked Ben.

I sunk my ghostly voice to a ghostly whisper. "The seven dead Chinamen whose throats you had cut to rob them."

"How much did you get?"

"Only a pint of little black collar buttons and a lady's back comb with thirteen paste shiners in it," I replied.

"Well, that's something," said Ben. "I wouldn't have got that much."

Then a faint, phosphorous light came from somewhere in the darkness," I continued. "And I saw a little tree coming up from the ground with something swinging to it, and one of the dead Chinamen arose and watered the tree with blood from his throat that I had cut, and the tree grew higher and higher till it was a large oak, and swinging to it, hanged by the neck until dead, was—"

"What?" asked Ben.

"A human figure—a man with a black hood over his face—and something compelled me, step by step, to approach the tree and remove the hood from over the face of the dead and hanged man, and it was—"

"Yourself," yawned Ben.

"Sure," I nodded. "That's what hurt! There I was, cutting myself down, hanged dead, and only got out of the job a pint of little black collar buttons and a lady's back comb with thirteen paste shiners in it. It was very disappointing."

"Ghostland isn't what it used to be," Ben sighed. "We ghosts used to pull off some pretty shaky stunts. When I was alive as a man and in the yam and bicycle business in Florida, the ghost of a big murdered buck negro used always to follow me into my bedroom at nights and lock the door behind me, and throw

the key under the bed, and then cut his throat in the mirror. And there I was, locked in with this ghost, and couldn't get the key, and it gave me a worried look that I have never quite got over. I didn't murder that particular negro either, but it was just my blame blue luck that I looked like the fellow who did, and so this negro ghost haunted me."

At this point there was a path leading off from the road, and a sign on the path reading: "No blue ghosts allowed on this path."

"What's this!" I exclaimed. "Haven't blue ghosts as much right in ghostland as green or pink ghosts?"

"They've got as much right of another sort," replied Ben. "But not this sort."

"Watch me amble down the path," I said.

"Watch me watch you ambling down the path." Ben gave a nasty, economical laugh.

"I'll be too busy ambling to watch you watch me ambling," I retorted, giving a nastier and more economical laugh, for I laughed through my nose, or rather the consciousness of a nose. "Well, good bye, old ghost!"

I took Ben's hand to wish him good-bye and good luck, when something happened that seemed more like light than sound, and it was good-bye to Ben's ghost, for there I stood holding Ben's right hand, and his right hand was all that remained of Ben's late ghost.

"Great Scott!" I gasped. "Something unlucky must have happened to poor old Ben."

Then I thought to let go of Ben's right hand, intending to place it on the fence nearby. If he should come back that way he would find his hand hanging there like a lost glove; but the blame blue ghostly hand wouldn't let go of mine!

For a while I ranted around like a young mustang attempting to throw a green monkey clinging to his back, but it was of no use. I had always suspected Ben as having more up his sleeve than his arm, and now I was positive he was that famous character who, as man or ghost, if he once got hold of you would never let go. The rest of him had jumped on that ghost bike and ridden away like a blue streak, but his right hand had remained, clutching my own right hand, like a rusty gopher trap.

This wouldn't do: they might find Ben's hand on me, clinging to me like a terrible retribution, and claim that I had killed him, suspecting that he had some ghostly dollars on his ghostly person, though no human eye, and I am as certain no ghostly eye, had ever discerned his person and twenty-five cents proximate or semi-proximate.

"It will have to wear off like a wart," I said, thrusting my right hand behind me with Ben's right hand still grasping it fast. Then I turned into the path reserved for most anything but blue ghosts.

I didn't see anything peculiar about that path, nor smell anything peculiar, nor hear any peculiar sound, nor even anticipate anything peculiar, but soon I began to feel peculiar. It began in my identity and stayed there, but that was enough. While boy and man I had always been very particular about my identity. My identity had been the only thing I had ever possessed beside a motorcycle and a wrist watch, which between them would run almost an hour, and believe me it was some identity, shading into actual personality at the extreme edge. I was now seized with a kind of uncertain, wobbly sensation in my identity, like a top must feel when it is about come to the end of its spin. This sensation soon became quite unbearable, for I felt as if I were not myself but Ben, while Ben was somewhere back in the distance; and was not himself but me.

It was bad enough to be a blue ghost not two hours old, with the dismembered hand of another blue ghost clinging to one's own hand like a rusty gopher trap, but this was crowding the limit—to be a blue ghost and some other dead man's blue ghost at that! And of all blue ghosts to be Edwin X. Benjamin's unlucky blue ghost!

I gave myself a nasty look and said, "Just my blame blue luck!"

Then I yelled, for I was positive I was Ben's ghost hurrying down that path, while Bob Tuffley's hand was clinging to my hand like a murdered thing.

I quickly decided that path was no place for me, as the sign had said, and I sought to turn back. *But I found I could not turn back!* I had got upon a path where no blue ghost could turn back, and I must continue to go on as another's ghost and not as myself. Continue to go on and leave myself with every step one step further behind.

Did you ever leave yourself behind, compelled to go on as some other man? Leave all your pride of youth and masculine beauty and a dash of everything high, if not holy, and sneak on as a miserable old yam eating, screw-necked sting-ray?

I did! I, the young ghost of Robert Jay Tuffley was that unhappy young ghost! But pity me not, for I'll be hanged if I care for your pity. I still remembered what I had been, though I felt all too keenly what I had become. I held my head high with pride of my old state, though my heart dragged with shame at my new condition. I looked like young Apollo but I felt like old Lucifer. I flamed without, but I was ashes within.

Yes, my poor ghost had turned into the wrong path and that path was the downward way to hell. I, formerly Robert Jay Tuffley, was now on my way to hell as the miserable ghost of Edwin X. Benjamin, retired Florida yam and bicycle merchant. There was the taste of some sour peanut butter in my mouth, the last dish of which Edwin X. Benjamin had partaken before his hasty demise to escape an advance of three cents the pound on cow's butter.

As I advanced the path grew wider, and after a time its borders began to bloom with primroses, just as the old poet Shakespeare tells of, and who himself often wore one of those primroses in his buttonhole. I plucked a primrose and placed it in my own buttonhole, for with the primroses a buttonhole had been provided me.

I had decided I would give Ben's ghost one hell of a good time. He had always looked as if he had been to hell, but he must have been hurried there through some dark underground passage, for he had none of the wide-gladway and-primrose-air about him. He had been cheated somewhere along the crowded line of life, but now I would give his ghost a wide swing of the rosy way.

But I had forgotten the cue of destiny, and now destiny rang down the curtain on this glad act and began to shift the scenery to gloom for Ben's appearance on the stage. Yes, I had become Edwin X. Benjamin's ghost and it was just Ben's blame blue luck to miss all this rosy swing that I had promised his poor ghost.

The path suddenly narrowed, the primroses withered, and no longer had I that feeling of being Ben's ghost but was Bob Tuffley again, with a rigid identity carrying a ripsaw personality capable of cutting the knottiest logic into kindling wood. Poor Ben's ghost had smelt but a few rods of primroses, then the bouquet of delight had been dashed from his nostrils, and for him all but the bill was over.

It was now that I ran into the tide of adventure that swept me out on the wide sea of the mysterious and ghostly, but where my rigid identity preserved me from losing my head, and my ripsaw personality prevented any malignant spirit from taking advantage of my youth and innocence as a ghost.

I met a young lady ghost. She was just a creation of pink and outline, without any real substance whatever. I had no idea that mere color and outline could be so appealing.

"A mere colored silhouette." I checked my beating heart. "Pooh, bah!" But I looked again, and there were two of them, and they were not pooh-bahs. They showed pink and faultlessly outlined beneath her pink outlined dress. Two faultless pink ankles, and for a moment I was sorry for Ben's ghost, for I was no longer Ben's ghost, but not for a moment was I sorry for the ghost of Bob Tuffley.

I introduced myself as Robert Jay Tuffley, which meant something, and she introduced herself as Genevieve Actum. I told her I didn't like her last name and offered to change it at the first flag station. It pained me very much to make this offer, for that blame blue ghostly hand of Ben's, still clinging to my hand like a rusty gopher trap, nearly squeezed my fingers off as I made the offer. It was as jealous as a clam that had lost its only pearl, and I had found that pearl.

"Believe me, little sport-ghost Genevieve," I said, saluting her chaste lips, "this is the ghostly life!"

"You have come at last!" she sighed. "Oh, I have waited, waited so long for you!"

"Where have you been waiting?" I asked, for being so young I could not tell her of much waiting on my part. As she smiled, I felt a manly crust come over my young ghost like that on the ghost of Julius Caesar himself.

"By the Nile," she replied. "The eternal Nile."

As she said this Ben's hand released mine and I looked and saw it was gone. Ben had funked at mention of the eternal Nile, and all that remained of him had sneaked off.

"If you were as old as Mary Ann, how old would Mary Ann be?" I asked her.

"Dear, bold, blunt boy," she smiled, "look not at a maiden through time, but look at time through a maiden, and time will be no more."

"You didn't happen to know of a skirt named Cleopatra on the Nile?" I inquired.

"I was her favorite manicurist," she replied. "Oh, history, history what were you without Egypt, and what were Egypt without Queen Cleopatra!"

"How did you get this far out of ancient history?" I asked.

"I am neither strayed nor lost," she said. "This is the ghostland of the ancients, and no ghost may leave here but by the consent of the seven sacred crocodiles of the Nile, who never consent."

Great Scott! here I was, a ghost just born, running after the girls of old Egypt, and I must get the consent of the seven sacred crocodiles of the Nile, who never consented, to get back into a ghostland even as recent as the times of Pocahontas. I certainly had backed up on time somewhere without noticing it. It must have been along that primrose path. Had I gone the full length of eternity and back again up to ancient history, as Ben's blame blue ghost, and not known it? I must have been stupid not to have noticed all eternity passing, but then, I recalled, I had been Ben's ghost, and that may have been the why of my wherefore.

"I'm going back," I told her. "I've a friend waiting back a ways and I'll send him along to talk it over with you. He knows ancient history like a personal diary."

"You can not go back," she smiled. "You must go on and on till you come to the ghostland of old King Chaos, and the time that was before time, and the maidens of that time."

"The girls of chaos!" I exclaimed. "They must be a little mixed in their dates and shapes."

"Dear, blunt boy," she smiled again, "their shapes are as the shapes of shapes before shapes. You will do well to linger with my shape, ancient as it is."

"Youth is the time to flit," I said. "I will flitter on and see these maidens of chaos. Little sport-ghost, farewell!"

"Dear boy ghost, farewell!" she wept. "Remember my shape when you behold the shapes of the maidens of chaos, whose shapes are as the shapes of shapes before shapes."

I almost lingered at her shapely speech, and turned back more than once to admire her shapely outline, but whilst alive as a man I had ever been a horizon chaser, and the old passion of flesh was still strong on my young ghost, and so I hurried after the horizon and left behind me this sweet maidenly ghost of two thousand Egyptian summers.

Soon I left the horizon itself behind me and came to the ghost-land of straight lines, where there was no horizon because there were no curves. This was the land of checkerboard maidens, square-mouthed and square-hipped, square-legged and square-eyed. I soon had the holy squares and my ghost suffered every torment of mal-adjustment to the ladies of the country and the blame square country itself. Everything in it was square, from Priscilla to possibility.

I kicked my young ghost through this land as fast as it could be squarely kicked, and after traveling for two square moons, came into the ghostland of the Smell-that-would-be-all. And it was all! I have met with several young and elderly smells in my time, as man and ghost, that were possessed of great ambition and marvelous genius in their line of endeavor, and extreme originality, and a promise only exceeded by their daring; but this Smell promised nothing, gave no hope for further achievement, held back nothing to spring later, for it was fulfillment itself.

There was nothing lacking, neither in body nor persistence, neither in achievement nor possibility. It was done, perfect, geometric, unquestionable, absolute! It arose with me, it lay down with me, it went before me and followed behind me. I lingered and it lingered with me, I hastened on and it had preceded me. I furnished but the nose and it did all the rest, willingly, freely, wholly. Nothing wearied it, nothing delayed it, nothing obscured it. It had length, breadth, thickness, and, like imagination, the mystic, mysterious fourth dimension was in it also.

"This is the third morning of the Great Smell!" I said on the third morning, for I kept the days by it, and that night was the third night of the Great Smell. Then the stars came out and shone above it and smelt to me as the Great Smell smelt, and the moon was drawn like a scimitar from the scabbard of night and hung in thrilling splendor above, and smelt as the Great Smell smelt. The next morning was the fourth morning of the Great Smell, and the following night the fourth night.

Once or twice I suspected that Ben's blue ghost was following me, then I concluded that I must be getting close on to chaos, and this was the smell of chaos itself. But one faith sustained my young ghost through this land of the Smell-that-would-be-all, and that was the faith that I was the smeller and not the smell.

On the sixth day I came out of the country of the Great Smell into a small country, which seemed to serve for no purpose but as a buffer to keep the smell back from the countries beyond. It must have been a very difficult job for this little country, requiring great talent, if not actual genius, by its anti-odor administration, but that administration did its work well and I was no longer accompanied by the Smell-that-was-all.

For a few days I rested in this buffer country, while my young ghost recovered sufficient strength, verve, and hope to

go on, then I proceeded advancing at great speed, as the clear, odorless air offered little resistance to my blue outline. I was so ethercalized that, had it not been for my rigid identity, I might have doubted my own existence.

Then I came all of a sudden into the country of unassembled girls. At first I could scarcely believe my own ghostly eyes. All about me, on the green lawns, among the pleasant trees, were faultless ankles and busts, and girlish heads, and hands, and arms, and feet, and shoulders, and all that goes to make beautiful girls, except the assembly. All these girlish installments were alive, attired in exquisite silks and laces, and all were smiling, or dancing, or swaying, or moving about or faintly stirring. All young and glowing, and fresh and sweet. All maddening dear.

I must have lost my head for a time, for when I came to a more coherent mind I found I had gathered together a considerable quantity of the unassembled girl parts without any definite object in view. I presume my first glowing idea had been to get plenty of parts together, then assemble of the fairest segments ten or twelve complete and perfect maidens.

On examination I found that I had more than sufficient parts for such an undertaking, and selecting the two fairest ankles I proceeded to assemble them with two dainty feet, but alas! there was no coherency between them, and they would not assemble and remain assembled. Again and again I tried, each time failing lamentably. It was the saddest moment of my young ghost life when I realized that while I had every girlish segment in the greatest superfluity and perfection, I yet could not assemble even a single maiden, and keep her assembled till she should take one step, or as much as stand alone.

I would but get a luscious girl assembled on the grass, and then as I sought to rise her to her feet, she would tumble apart like a girl of sand, or cards, or quicksilver, and the parts would move away from one another. If this was the work of old King Chaos, I asked just one whack at old King Chaos.

I worked all that day and night, and well into the next day, trying to get just one girl together for just five minutes, but unsuccessfully. I had all the materials a husky young ghost could desire, and every charming variety of that dear material, but the precious magnetism to bind the lovely parts together was wholly lacking.

I all but wept as I kissed a rosy mouth, then gently lay the girlish head down on the green grass. I couldn't use that girlish petal without the whole blossom. It smiled at me and I turned away and, putting one sad foot before another, passed out of that land of unassembled and unassembable girls.

I had gone an hour's journey when I came to a large rock, and hearing someone conversing behind it I peered around and saw Ben's ghost seated near his ghost bicycle.

"Just my blame blue luck," he was conversing with himself. "After getting her this far, to find I have lost one of her ankles on the way! And the sweetest little ankle this side of poetry! Now I'll have to ride back and hunt for it, and I suppose somebody else will have found it and gone off with it, and I'll have to take an ankle that doesn't match, or do without entirely!"

I saw that there was a nice clean plump sack lying by Ben's bicycle and I judged that the unassembled girl was in this sack, perhaps with a number of duplicate parts.

I came from behind the rock and offered to help Ben hunt for the missing ankle, yet I questioned the wisdom of the whole affair, for should he find the ankle he would still be unable to assemble the girl.

"Go to grass!" he growled. "What are you doing, anyway, this far from your last unpaid bill?"

I told him of my journey and spoke of the country of the Great Smell, but he had never heard of it.

"Must have been all in your own mind," he said. "But I never discuss smells in the hearing of a bad odor."

I looked and saw that neither of his hands was missing.

"How about it?" I asked. "I thought you lost your hand, and it hung on to me. Your right hand."

"I was with you all the time," he replied, "till you met Genevieve Actum, and then I walked away. I wasn't blown up or melted down, but I merely sublimated all of my ghost person, except my right hand, till it was so fine you couldn't see it. You're young yet: when you're as old as I am you'll know half as many ghostly tricks as I do, and I'll be older and know twice as many more."

I saw that he desired to be left alone with his bike and the unassembled girl, and wishing him good luck, I went on my way. My young ghost had fully recovered from the depressing effects of the country of the Great Smell, and as I proceeded I began to feel more fit and sound than a new drum. I soon commenced to shout and sing and beat a great tattoo on my well-stretched spirit, in pure excess of energy. I had a sudden expansion of power and largeness, like a stick of dynamite at the instant of concussion. I wanted to go back and bite a large piece out of the rock that had concealed Ben, and then wipe his blue ghost off the ghostly map.

I was fairly bursting with the pride of my own remarkable identity. Was I not the astonishing Robert Jay Tuffley, of whom there was no duplicate or even imitation in the whole ghostly universe! I was beyond duplication, I was beyond imitation, I was beyond description itself! There was none like me, there had never been another like me, there could never be another like me! I was the first, last, intermediate, and only Robert Jay Tuffley, unique, unapproachable, with a perfectly rigid identity supporting a rip-saw personality! I had been *some* man, and now I was *some* blue ghost! I would no longer be a blue ghost! I would aspire higher in the spectrum of ghostliness! I would be a green ghost!

I expanded with pride, I dilated with ambition; I whoofed; I burst into vivid green!

MASTERPIECES OF WEIRD FICTION

No. 3—The Damned Thing

By AMBROSE BIERCE

CHAPTER ONE

One Does Not Always Eat What Is On the Table

BY the light of a tallow candle which had been placed on one end of a rough table a man was reading something written in a book. It was an old account book, greatly worn; and the writing was not, apparently, very legible, for the man sometimes held the page close to the flame of the candle to get a stronger light on it. The shadow of the book would then throw into obscurity a half of the room, darkening a number of faces and figures; for besides the reader, eight other men were present. Seven of them sat against the rough log walls, silent, motionless, and, the room being small, not very far from the table. By extending an arm any one of them could have touched the eighth man, who lay on the table, face upward, partly covered by a sheet, his arms at his sides. He was dead.

The man with the book was not reading aloud, and no one spoke; all seemed to be waiting for something to occur; the dead man only was without expectation. From the blank darkness outside came in, through the aperture that served for a window, all the ever unfamiliar noises of night in the wilderness—the long nameless note of a distant coyote; the stilly pulsing thrill of tireless insects in trees; strange cries of night birds, so different from those of the birds of day; the drone of great blundering beetles, and all that mysterious chorus of small sounds that seem always to have been but half heard when they have suddenly ceased, as if conscious of an indiscretion. But nothing of all this was noted in that company; its members were not overmuch addicted to idle interest in matters of no practical importance; that was obvious in every line of their rugged faces—obvious even in the dim light of the single candle. They were evidently men of the vicinity—farmers and woodsmen.

The person reading was a trifle different; one would have said of him that he was of the world, worldly, albeit there was that in his attire which attested a certain fellowship with the organisms of his environment. His coat would hardly have passed muster in San Francisco; his foot-gear was not of urban origin, and the hat that lay by him on the floor (he was the only one uncovered) was such that if one had considered it as an article of mere personal adornment he would have missed its meaning. In countenance the man was rather prepossessing, with just a hint of sternness; though that he may have assumed or cultivated, as appropriate to one in authority. For he was a coroner. It was by virtue of his office that he had possession of the book in which he was reading; it had been found among the dead man's effects—in his cabin, where the inquest was now taking place.

When the coroner had finished reading he put the book into his breast pocket. At that moment the door was pushed open and a young man entered. He, clearly, was not of mountain birth and breeding: he was clad as those who dwell in cities. His clothing was dusty, however, from travel. He had, in fact, been riding hard to attend the inquest.

The coroner nodded; no one else greeted him.

"We have waited for you," said the coroner. "It is necessary to have done with this business tonight."

The young man smiled. "I am sorry to have kept you," he said. "I went away, not to evade your summons, but to post to my newspaper an account of what I suppose I am recalled to relate."

The coroner smiled.

"The account that you posted to your newspaper," he said, "differs, probably, from that which you will give here under oath."

"That," replied the other, rather hotly and with a visible flush, "is as you please. I used manifold paper and have a copy of what I sent. It was not written as news, for it is incredible, but as fiction. It may go as a part of my testimony under oath."

"But you say it is incredible."

"That is nothing to you, sir, if I also swear that it is true."

The coroner was silent for a time, his eyes upon the floor. The men about the sides of the cabin talked in whispers, but seldom withdrew their gaze from the face of the corpse. Presently the coroner lifted his eyes and said: "We will resume the inquest."

The men removed their hats. The witness was sworn.

"What is your name?" the coroner asked.

"William Harker."

"Age?"

"Twenty-seven."

"You knew the deceased, Hugh Morgan?"

"Yes."

"You were with him when he died?"

"Near him."

"How did that happen—your presence, I mean?"

"I was visiting him at his place to shoot and fish. A part of my purpose, however, was to study him and his odd, solitary way of life. He seemed a good model for a character in fiction. I sometimes write stories."

"I sometimes read them."

"Thank you."

"Stories in general—not yours."

Some of the jurors laughed. Against a somber background humor shows high lights. Soldiers in the intervals of battle laugh easily, and a jest in the death chamber conquers by prise.

"Relate the circumstances of this man's death," said the coroner. "You may use any notes or memoranda that you please."

The witness understood. Pulling a manuscript from his breast pocket he held it near the candle and turning the leaves until he found the passage that he wanted began to read.

CHAPTER TWO

What May Happen in a Field of Wild Oats

". . . The sun had hardly risen when we left the house. We were looking for quail, each with a shotgun, but we had only one dog. Morgan said that our best ground was beyond a certain ridge that he pointed out, and we crossed it by a trail through the *chaparral*. On the other side was comparatively level

ground, thickly covered with wild oats. As we emerged from the *chaparral* Morgan was but a few yards in advance. Suddenly we heard, at a little distance to our right and partly in front, a noise as of some animal thrashing about in the bushes, which we could see were violently agitated.

"'We've started a deer,' I said, 'I wish we had brought a rifle.'

"Morgan, who had stopped and was intently watching the agitated *chaparral*, said nothing, but had cocked both barrels of his gun and was holding it in readiness to aim. I thought him a trifle excited, which surprised me, for he had a reputation for exceptional coolness, even in moments of sudden and imminent peril.

"'O, come,' I said. 'You are not going to fill up a deer with quail-shot, are you?'

"Still he did not reply; but catching a sight of his face as he turned it slightly toward me I was struck by the intensity of his look. Then I understood that we had serious business in hand and my first conjecture was that we had 'jumped' a grizzly. I advanced to Morgan's side, cocking my piece as I moved.

"The bushes were now quiet and the sounds had ceased, but Morgan was as attentive to the place as before.

"'What is it? What the devil is it?' I asked.

"'That Damned Thing!' he replied, without turning his head. His voice was husky and unnatural. He trembled visibly.

"I was about to speak further, when I observed the wild oats near the place of the disturbance moving in the most inexplicable way. I can hardly describe it. It seemed as if stirred by a streak of wind, which not only bent it, but pressed it down—crushed it so that it did not rise; and this movement was slowly prolonging itself directly toward us.

"Nothing that I had ever seen had affected me so strangely as this unfamiliar and unaccountable phenomenon, yet I am unable to recall any sense of fear. I remember—and tell it here because, singularly enough, I recollected it then—that once in looking carelessly out of an open window I momentarily mistook a small tree close at hand for one of a group of larger trees at a little distance away. It looked the same size as the others, but being more distinctly and sharply defined in mass and detail seemed out of harmony with them. It was a mere falsification of the law of aerial perspective, but it startled, almost terrified me. We so rely upon the orderly operation of familiar natural laws that any seeming suspension of them is noted as a menace to our safety, a warning of unthinkable calamity. So now the apparently causeless movement of the herbage and the slow, undeviating approach of the line of disturbances were distinctly disquieting. My companion appeared actually frightened, and I could hardly credit my senses when I saw him suddenly throw his gun to his shoulder and fire both barrels at the agitated grain! Before the smoke of the discharge had cleared away I heard a loud, savage cry—a scream like that of a wild animal—and flinging his gun upon the ground Morgan sprang away and ran swiftly from the spot. At the same instant I was thrown violently to the ground by the impact of something unseen in the smoke—some soft, heavy substance that seemed thrown against me with great force.

"Before I could get upon my feet and recover my gun, which seemed to have been struck from my hands, I heard Morgan crying out as if in mortal agony, and mingled with his cries were such hoarse, savage sounds as one hears from fighting dogs. Inexpressibly terrified, I srtuggled to my feet and looked in the direction of Morgan's retreat; and may Heaven in mercy spare me from another sight like that! At a distance of less than thirty yards was my friend, down upon one knee, his head thrown back at a frightful angle, hatless, his long hair in disorder and his whole body in violent movement from side to side, backward and forward. His right arm was lifted and seemed to lack the hand—at least, I could see none. The other arm was invisible. At times, as my memory now reports this extraordinary scene, I could discern but a part of his body; it was as if it had been partly blotted out—I cannot otherwise express it—then a shifting of his position would bring it all into view again.

"All this must have occurred within a few seconds, yet in that time Morgan assumed all the postures of a determined wrestler vanquished by superior weight and strength. I saw nothing but him, and him not always distinctly. During the entire incident his shouts and curses were heard, as if through an enveloping uproar of such sounds of rage and fury as I have never heard from the throat of man or brute!

"For a moment only I stood irresolute then throwing down my gun I ran forward to my friend's assistance. I had a vague belief that he was suffering from a fit, or some form of convulsion. Before I could reach his side he was down and quiet. All sounds had ceased, but with a feeling of such terror as even these awful events had not inspired I now saw again the mysterious movement of the wild oats, prolonging itself from the trampled area about the prostrate man toward the edge of a wood. It was only when it had reached the wood that I was able to withdraw my eyes and look at my companion. He was dead."

CHAPTER FOUR

A Man Though Naked May Be in Rags

The coroner rose from his seat and stood beside the dead man. Lifting an edge of the sheet he pulled it away, exposing the entire body, altogther naked and showing in the candle-light a clay-like yellow. It had, however, broad maculations of bluish black, obviously caused by extravasated blood from contusions. The chest and sides looked as if they had been beaten with a bludgeon. There were dreadful lacerations; the skin was torn in strips and shreds.

The coroner moved round to the end of the table and undid a silk handkerchief which had been passed under the chin and knotted on the top of the head. When the handkerchief was drawn away it exposed what had been the throat. Some of the jurors who had risen to get a better view repented their curiosity and turned away their faces. Witness Harker went to the open window and leaned out across the sill, faint and sick. Dropping the handkerchief upon the dead man's neck the coroner stepped to an angle of the room and from a pile of clothing produced one garment after another, each of which he held up a moment for inspection. All were torn and stiff with blood. The jurors did not make a closer inspection. They seemed rather uninterested. They had, in truth, seen all this before; the only thing that was new to them being Harker's testimony.

"Gentlemen," the coroner said, "we have no more evidence, I think. Your duty has been already explained to you; if there is nothing you wish to ask you may go outside and consider your verdict."

The foreman rose—a tall, bearded man of sixty, coarsely clad.

"I should like to ask one question, Mr. Coroner," he said. "What asylum did this yer last witness escape from?"

"Mr. Harker," said the coroner gravely and tranquilly, "from what asylum did you last escape?"

Harker flushed crimson again, but said nothing, and the seven jurors rose and solemnly filed out of the cabin.

"If you have done insulting me, sir," said Harker, as soon as he and the officer were left alone with the dead man,

"I suppose I am at liberty to go?"

"Yes."

Harker started to leave, but paused, with his hand on the door latch. The habit of his profession was strong in him—stronger than his sense of personal dignity. He turned about and said:

"The book that you have there—I recognize it as Morgan's diary. You seemed greatly interested in it; you read it while I was testifying. May I see it? The public would like—"

"The book will cut no figure in this matter," replied the official, slipping it into his coat pocket; "all the entries in it were made before the writer's death."

As Harker passed out of the house the jury reentered and stood about the table, on which the now covered corpse showed under the sheet with sharp definition. The foreman seated himself near the candle, produced from his breast pocket a pencil and scrap of paper and wrote rather laboriously the following verdict, which with various degrees of effort all signed:

"We the jury, do find that the remains come to their death at the hands of a mountain lion, but some of us think, all the same, they had fits."

CHAPTER FOUR

An Explanation from the Tomb

In the diary of the late Hugh Morgan are certain interesting entries having possibly, a scientific value as suggestions. At the inquest upon his body the book was not put in evidence; possibly the coroner thought it not worth while to confuse the jury. The date of the first of the entries mentioned cannot be ascertained; the upper part of the leaf is torn away; the part of the entry remaining follows:

". . . would run in half-circle, keeping his head turned always toward the center, and again he would stand still, barking furiously. At last he ran away into the brush as fast as he could go. I thought at first that he had gone mad, but on returning to the house found no other alteration in his manner than what was obviously due to fear of punishment.

"Can a dog see with his nose? Do odors impress some cerebral center with images of the thing that emitted them?

"Sept. 2.—Looking at the stars last night as they rose above the crest of the ridge east of the house, I observed them successively disappear—from left to right. Each was eclipsed but an instant, and only a few at the same time, but along the entire length of the ridge all that were within a degree or two of the crest were blotted out. It was as if something had passed along between me and them; but I could not see it, and the stars were not thick enough to define its outline. Ugh! I don't like this."

Several weeks' entries are missing, three leaves being torn from the book.

"Sept. 27.—It has been about here again—I find evidence of its presence every day. I watched again all last night in the same cover, gun in hand, double-charged with buckshot. In the morning the fresh footprints were there, as before. Yet I would have sworn that I did not sleep—indeed, I hardly sleep at all. It is terrible, insupportable! If these amazing experiences are real I shall go mad; if they are fanciful I am mad already.

"Oct. 3.—I shall not go—it shall not drive me away. No, this is *my* house, *my* land. God hates a coward. . .

"Oct. 5.—I can stand it no longer; I have invited Harker to pass a few weeks with me—he has a level head. I can judge from his manner if he thinks me mad.

"Oct. 7.—I have the solution of the mystery; it came to me last night—suddenly, as by revelation. How simple—how terribly simple!

"There are sounds that we cannot hear. At either end of the scale are notes that stir no chord of that imperfect instrument, the human ear. They are too high or too grave. I have observed a flock of blackbirds occupying an entire tree-top—the tops of several trees—and all in full song. Suddenly—in a moment—at absolutely the same instant—all spring into the air and fly away. How? They coud not all see one another—whole tree-tops intervened. At no point could a leader have been visible to all. There must have been a signal of warning or command, high and shrill above the din, but by me unheard. I have observed, too, the same simultaneous flight when all were silent, among not only blackbirds, but other birds—quail, for example, widely separated by bushes—even on opposite sides of a hill.

"It is known to seamen that a school of whales basking or sporting on the surface of the ocean, miles apart, with the convexity of the earth between, will sometimes dive at the same instant—all gone out of sight in a moment. The signal has been sounded—too grave for the ear of the sailor at the masthead and his comrades on the deck—who nevertheless feel its vibrations in the ship as the stones of a cathedral are stirred by the bass of the organ.

"As with sounds, so with colors. At each end of the solar spectrum the chemist can detect the presence of what are known as 'actinic' rays. They represent colors—integral colors in the composition of light—which we are unable to discern. The human eye is an imperfect instrument; its range is but a few octaves of the real 'chromatic scale.' I am not mad; there are colors that we cannot see.

"And, God help me! the Damned Thing is of such a color!"

Rare Animals Discovered on Dipsomania Isle

DOCTOR WILFRED H. OSGOOD, big game hunter and chief curator of zoology of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, has just returned from an extensive expedition through South America, bringing with him 2,000 species of wild animal and bird life, some so rare that their names are still to be discovered.

Among the oddities of the collection are the pudu, South American for small deer; the huillin, a strange species of otter; the coypu, which is a large water rat; the huemul, another type of South American deer; the guanuco, or wild camel; nandu, which means ostrich, and the viecacha, or another species of rat that resembles a rabbit.

The bulk of the collection, according to Dr. Osgood, was found on the isolated Island of Chiloe, which is about the size of Vancouver and lies off the southern coast of Chile. It is populated by a tribe of Indians, numbering about 100,000, whose chief occupation, Dr. Osgood said, is getting drunk. They are badly in need of the Volstead act and it is said that their capacity for alcohol is unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

A Fantastic Bit of Fiction
By FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

THE TEAK-WOOD SHRINE

HERE ends the curse of the teak-wood devil. Its tale of horror is full. I have brought it here to this bridge to throw it into the river before it brings more misery into the world.

I don't wonder that you look amazed at me, sir, for I am much changed since you last saw me, a scant two months ago. I am no longer the same woman, for the power of the teak-wood shrine has dragged me through hell. See how the teak-wood devil grins! How the little rubies of its eyes shine! Do you think it does not know what it has done to me—that it is merely a dead thing of wood and precious stones? It knows only too well. It has turned my hair white and lined my face with suffering. I have forgotten how to smile.

Oh, no, sir, I would rather you did not take it into your hands. Let me hurl it over the railing. Let me destroy it at once. No, I beseech you, sir! Not for all the wealth of the world would I give this jeweled shrine away. It can cause nothing but unhappiness and troubled thoughts—thoughts so terrible that only death can chase them away.

No person has ever looked into this shrine and lived, save only me and one other—but he was a holy man of India, and I am dying. My sands are running out rapidly. I shall welcome death.

This is the Shrine-devil. See how sleek and yellow it is! How fat and smiling! Was it carved thus, think you, to quell suspicion and invite the unfortunate possessor to touch the ruby that opens the sliding door? How unctuously that little idol guards its terrible secret!

A thousand dollars? No, sir, not for fifty thousand would I sell it to you, nor for fifty times fifty thousand. Money cannot buy happiness for me. But grief and suffering would attend you if I gave you this shrine. The secret locked in its heart would drive you mad. If death failed to hunt you out, you would go in search of it. For the secret is not to be borne. I have looked into the shrine and I still live, but that is because of my prayers before I touched the jewel that released the little panel. Woe is me that I prayed! For had I not prayed, I might now be dead, and therefore happy, instead of slowly drowning in the welter of misery that rises ever higher about me.

A holy man of India gave the shrine to a Christian bishop who had done him a great service.

"Ask and you shall receive," he said; but he fell upon his knees and begged release from his promise when the bishop demanded this little teak-wood shrine.

"The bishop knows not what he asks," said the holy man. "Fain would I grant him anything but this, for it will bring him misery and ruin."

"Nay, by my holy faith," said the bishop, "since you have asked me to choose, and it is no small service I have done you, I will be satisfied with nothing else but the shrine. I shall annul the power of the shrine-devil with a Christian prayer, and show you once more the impotency of pagan charms."

"Bishop, bishop," answered the holy man very gravely, "it will take a potent spell indeed to chain the fat devil of the teak-wood shrine. And until you find that potent spell, I conjure you not to examine the shrine too closely, lest you touch by chance the little jewel push-button that opens the door to the mystery within it, for then you will be lost utterly."

"Tonight," said the bishop, "I shall open it."

"Nay," said the holy man, "if I thought you were not jesting, I would kill you now, and count myself your benefactor as having saved you from misery the like of which you cannot dream exists."

So the bishop gave his promise that he would not open the shrine. For months the teak-wood devil smiled at him from behind the big Bible in his study and wrought him no manner of harm at all, for he had not pressed the ruby that opens the sliding door.

Then one day guests came to the bishop's house, and he told them the story of the shrine, even as I have related it to you. One of them took it into his hands and curiously examined the jewels that were embedded in the teak. As he examined it, his face turned ghastly pale, and he stared like a man whose eyes are fixed open in death, for by chance he had touched the ruby and opened the sliding door.

Then he uttered a laugh so mirthless, so terrible, that one of the women shrieked and fainted dead away. It was plain that the man was a maniac.

The boshop took from his hands the shrine, and touched in his turn the revealing ruby. The panel slid back again, and the bishop found himself looking into the interior of the shrine.

"There is nothing here at all," he exclaimed, "but McRae has gone mad from terror."

Then suddenly the bishop's face went white, as he realized what he had seen. He sank to his knees and prayed. McRae broke away from the group and ran to his lodgings in the English quarter of that native village. When they went for him he lay dead on the floor, grasping tightly in his hand the revolver with which he had slain himself. The bishop never ceased to cry out for death, and he passed away in delirium within a week.

THERE was in the bishop's household a native servant, who had listened to his master's recital and witnessed the tragic results of opening the shrine. He determined to possess the treasure, because of the jewels that shone between the yellow hands of the image. The servant was very cautious, for he feared lest he might himself experience the agony of soul that had killed the bishop and caused McRae to slay himself. He visited a seer, therefore, and paid ten rupees for a spell to bind the teak-wood devil. Then the servant took the shrine from the bishop's study, and fled with it to Singapore, where he tried to dispose of it. But the shops all turned against him, and offered him little or nothing for his treasure, for they said the jewels were of no value.

Disconsolate, the servant took the shrine between his knees and tried to dig out the rubies that lay between the hands

of the guardian image, for he thought they must be large and perfect. Inadvertently, he touched the ruby push-button, and the panel slid back for an instant, and he saw the mystery.

His heart was troubled, but he did not understand what he had seen. This was because of the spell put upon him by the seer. Because he had not understood, he explored the mystery again, and the door slid back a second time. And now he knew.

The power of the incantation was exhausted, for it was purchased with stolen rupees. A veil fell away from the servant's eyes, and he saw into the shrine with a clear brain and full understanding of what he looked upon. He knew now why poor McRae had killed himself, and why the bishop had prayed for death.

Concealing the shrine in a fold of his sash, the servant went down to the water-front to cast it away. He stood on the wharf and watched a liner about to move away across the ocean. A great envy fell upon him of all those people, because they were ignorant of the secret hidden in the shrine, and could therefore still be happy. With this envy came also a great wave of self-pity, for the teak-wood devil was scourging his brain, and he knew that he could never smile again.

Then he took the terrible thing from his sash, to throw it into the sea. The jewels that were the eyes of the teak-wood image threw out a strange light, and an American, hurrying to board the ship, stopped with a shrill whistle, and demanded to see the curious object. The servant refused, but the American persisted, and offered much money for the treasure. The man shook his head sadly, and told the American the whole history of the shrine, as he had heard it from the bishop, even as I have repeated it to you.

The American forced into the servant's hands a roll of bills, and rushed up the gang-plank with the shrine in his arms, for the men on the ship were calling to him. The servant waved the bills at him frantically, and struggled to follow him, but the deck-hands stopped him, the gang-plank was pulled up, and the liner moved slowly away.

The American dived into his state-room and concealed the object in the covers of his berth. Then he returned to the deck. A crowd was gathered on the dock, and there was a great commotion, but of the bishop's servant there was no sign. He had jumped into the sea.

The American was John Aubrey, my late master, who first told me the story of the shrine on his return from India. He told me the tale again two months ago, with madness gleaming from his eyes, and begged me to destroy the thing, to throw it into the river, to let it sink where human eyes would nevermore look upon it.

You were my master's friend, and to you I can talk. It was this teak-wood shrine that killed him. He took it from the mantel to show it to me. Disbelieving its power, disbelieving the entire story told him by the bishop's servant at Singapore—for he had been unable to find the hidden spring of the shrine—he suddenly, by an evil chance, pressed the ruby, and the panel slid open. He tried to prevent it from closing, and inserted the nail of his little finger, but the door slid back into place notwithstanding, after he had caught a fleeting glimpse into the very heart of the shrine.

He laughed triumphantly to think he had at last found the touch-button. He was as excited as a small boy over his discovery. That was because he did not yet know what he had seen. But soon he began to worry, and his face grew slowly more and more drawn, as the terrible truth began to take hold of his brain. His eyes filled with dread. His brows contracted in horror. He made me promise to destroy the shrine. Then he went to his room and locked the door.

I concealed the object, which I now hated with all my soul, for I wanted no more misery brought into the world by its hideous means. I was called at the inquest, with the other servants, but I told only what the others told, about how we heard the shot, and broke open the door, and found our master lying dead on the floor of his bedroom. But of the teak-wood shrine, and the hidden panel, and the fat devil with the wooden belly and the ruby eyes, I said not a word to anybody.

And then I prayed—God, how I prayed!—that unto me it might be given to release the world from this horror. Then I touched the ruby and saw what it was that the teak-wood image was guarding so complacently. It is because of my prayers that I am undergoing this life in death, this burden of misery, instead of being happy in the grave.

It must be in answer to my prayers that today I have the strength to bring the shrine to this bridge to throw it into the muddy waters. When that is done I shall be ready to die. My life is ebbing, and I am moving swiftly to my grave. I have read the teak-wood devil's secret, and all the sweetness and light have gone from my life.

Give me back the shrine, sir, or else fling it with your own hands, at once and forever, into the blessed depths of the water. No, no, sir, you must not look for the jewel! At once, fling it, or you will be yourself its victim!

Oh, oh! You have done it! You have looked!—

What horrid sound is that?—You laugh, but that is because you do not yet know.—Now, do you begin to realize?—You know now what I have suffered. You have entered upon the path that can end only in death.

Oh, oh, oh!—Help me, you at the end of the bridge—Oh, gentlemen, hurry!—That is where they sank!—Look, they are going down for the third time! They are lost, they are gone! He and the teak-wood devil! Heaven be thanked!

And now, sirs, you may take me away—to a hospital, or an asylum for the insane. It matters not where, for my days are numbered. Nothing matters any more, for the curse of the teak-wood devil is ended. Good sirs, take me away.

A Five-Minute Yarn, With An Unexpected Twist at the End

THE MONEY LENDER

By VINCENT STARRETT

"SEND him in!" cried the warty man suddenly, with something between a snarl and a cry.

The door marked *"Private"* opened to admit a shrinking figure, then was discreetly closed.

The man who had entered giggled hysterically by way of greeting, removing a cracked derby at the same instant. He was stoop-shouldered and frail. His underlip quivered curiously. Yet in his attitude there was a sort of desperate humor, a pathetic braggadocio. He waited in twitching nervousness, twirling his cracked derby in his hands.

"Sit down!" said Martin Hoganson, immersed in a letter file. His voice grated like a rusty hinge, but the words were automatic.

The man addressed jumped as if the penetrating voice had been a sudden knife thrust sharply into him. His maudlin giggle again escaped. He dropped into a chair near the door and swung his left leg over his right, then after a moment reversed the performance.

Finally, he placed both feet squarely together before him on the floor. His pale eyes fixed themselves upon a calendar on the rear wall. The calendar had been the gift of a great banking institution; the legend across its top panel read: "Pay All Bills By Check. You Will Spend Less Money This Way Than If You Have The Cash About You."

In a moment the searcher at the oak cabinet swung to attention. He glanced at the man in the chair out of pouched eyes, then darted a look at the clock.

"Right on the dot, eh, Smith?" he observed.

The visitor's voice cracked in a mirthless laugh. "I was an office man myself, once."

"Were yuh?" asked Martin Hoganson, without interest. As the other did not reply, he continued: "Well, I s'pose yuh didn't make an appointment to tell me *that*, eh?"

Martin Hoganson's mannerisms were peculiar. His life had been attempted twice.

"Ha, ha! Of course not," giggled the victim of this pleasant irony.

If only Hoganson were not so damned fat, he thought! Others in their time had been irritated by Mr. Hoganson's fatness.

"I guess you know why I'm here, Mr. Hoganson," smirked the man Smith. "I wrote a letter. . . I hoped. . ."

"I read it," said Martin Hoganson, "and of all the damn drivel I ever read it was the worst."

The visitor was shocked.

"I hoped. . ."

"Ye-eh," said Hoganson, with deep scorn, "they all do! And what good does hoping do *me*? They all hope, and none of 'em pay."

"You mean you won't. . . you can't. . . ?"

"Nothin' doin'!" said Martin Hoganson solidly. "That's flat, Smith! Yuh oughta know better."

The thin man drooped in his chair. This was what he had feared. His forced smile vanished.

"Mr. Hoganson," he said desperately, "I ain't lying! My wife's sick. . . I'm sick. . . I can't do it! I ain't lazy. I'm willing to work; but you know what chance a man's got at my age!" Eagerly confidential, he concluded: "I ain't even got the rent!"

The money lender toyed thoughtfully with a penholder.

"You've had time, Smith," he said. "We been pretty lenient. We extended your time two weeks ago. Las' month you was three weeks late, and month before that you was a week late. Looks like we been pretty good to yuh. I ain't a hard man, but I can't afford to get sentimental."

"You couldn't give me just a week?" pleaded Smith.

"Not a day!" said Hoganson. "I'm awful sorry, Smith, but there y'are! I'm a business man, and so are you. Sentiment don't pay. You know that. You knew what you was doin' when you signed our agreement. We made good, and you didn't; that's all. It's all straight—and it's all legal!"

He looked defiantly at his visitor, as if daring him to deny it. The little man was blinking. He seemed, somehow, to have shrunk in height.

"Can't you give a fellow a chance?" he whispered.

"A chance!" echoed the money lender. "I ain't drivin' yuh! It ain't me! This is plain *business*. Smith, can't yuh see?"

He adjusted his tie reproachfully. The rings on his lifted fingers angered his visitor, who leaped to his feet.

"Business be. . . !" At the height of his indiscretion, Smith weakened. "I gotta have it!" he said. "I tell you *I gotta have it!* Good God!" he hoarsely whispered, "don't you ever think of anything but business? Don't it mean anything that you're breaking me?"

"I ain't goin' to argue with yuh," said Hoganson. "You're excited."

"Excited!"

Quite suddenly Smith *became* excited. He went to pieces in an instant.

"You lying crook!" he shrilled. "You damn thief! You. . ."

The money lender smiled.

"Tut, tut," he deprecated. "This won't do, Smith! I'm treatin' yuh pretty white—pretty white! I told yuh I'm sorry for yuh. Look here, now: you go out and rustle up the money some place—any place—and bring it in tomorrow. That'll give yuh a day. I don't wanta be hard on yuh. Here, have a smoke on me!"

He extracted a gaudy cigar box from a drawer and extended it across the flat desk.

The man Smith seemed frozen with horror. He resisted an impulse to seize a handful of the costly cigars and hurl them into the face of Martin Hoganson. Then the ghastly humor of the situation struck him; his anger became deadly. He stretched out a hand and transferred one of the cigars from the box to his pocket.

"All right, Hoganson," he said insolently. "I'll take it—because I think it's the only thing you ever gave away for nothing. I want to save it—as a souvenir—in case I should forget you!"

His eyes fell again upon the calendar. "Pay all bills by check," it said. "You will spend less money—"

He turned away, a crooked smile twisting at his mouth. Martin Hoganson watched him with puzzled eyes. Vaguely alarmed, the money lender saw his visitor open the door; heard the door close behind him. With a swift shrug the warty man resumed his earlier occupation.

OUTSIDE the tall building, the man Smith stopped, bewildered. He was still dazed.

About him were hurrying men who looked at their watches, and walked with nervous haste. Messenger boys drifted in and out of the maze of traffic, with incredible accuracy. A stream of autos and trucks rolled up the street on one side and down the street on the other. Street cars clanged past; Smith knew that they were carrying busy men on their way to keep business appointments. He glanced up at the lines of telegraph wires strung above his head, and seemed to hear them hum with unseen messages . . . *business* messages. . .

Everything spoke of business, the hideous monster that had ruined him, and that now threatened to engulf his family. It was as if the whole mystery of life, its madness, its futility, suddenly had been made clear to him. . . The corner on which he stood marked the intersection of two business thoroughfares in one of the largest business cities of the world.

It was all for money! How he hated it—money!—the golden calf before which bowed down in idolatry an insane universe. Something like this was in his thought; but the utterance, struggling for articulation, came forth as tears. God!

The kids would expect him at home shortly. A horrible humor lurked in the situation. The money he so despised was what he needed most. Well, he had made up his mind to get it!

From his side pocket he drew forth the expensive cigar—Hoganson's cigar. He looked at its rich coloring, its garish label. A smile curled his lips. He tore away the paper band, and ground it beneath his heel, finding a savage pleasure in the childish performance. He had said he would keep the cigar, but would he? It had been a senseless remark. . . theatrical! He would do better to crush it in his hands, as if it were Hoganson's oily throat; or—happy thought!—mail it back to its abominable donor!

But anger was past. Coolness was what he needed now. As for the cigar—By Heaven, he would *smoke* it!

With the cynical humor of a defeated man, he touched a match to the weed and watched the smoke curl past its fiery tip.

As he smoked, he mused, knocking the ash from his cigar onto a window-ledge of the tall building that braced his back. High up in the building were the offices of Martin Hoganson. . . who by nightfall would have ceased to exist.

In his pocket there was left just enough to buy something he had thought he would never have occasion to use; something his wife was afraid to have around the house, because of the kids . . . They would expect him home shortly!

He smiled at the little heap of ash on the window-ledge, and without framing the thought knew that it was significant of life. Then he hurled the cigar butt into the street and rapidly walked away.

WHEN Martin Hoganson left the building, an hour later, a husky breeze was blowing. He turned up his collar, muttering suave imprecations. His mind still vaguely dwelt on the deadly whiteness of the man Smith's face.

"Damn him!" said Hoganson, as he moved toward the curb, "he almost threatened me. A fella like that is dangerous; he oughta be in jail. By God, if he knew I didn't dare close him up, he'd make trouble. I'll bet he's scared stiff! He'll get the coin somewhere. I know these fellas; they can always get coin somewhere, when they have to!"

With this logical and pleasing thought, Martin Hoganson stepped off the curbstone into the street. At the same instant a little puff of wind caught the heap of cigar ash on the window-ledge and scattered it. A flake of inconsiderable size blew swiftly toward the street. It lodged in the money lender's eye.

With an oath, Hoganson drew a handkerchief from his pocket and applied it to the smarting member. He had taken several steps into the road, but now he turned to retrace them. The handkerchief was still tightly pressed to his eye.

"Look out!" shrieked a man's voice, in sudden fear. . . and there came a grinding of brakes and the shriek of a motor siren.

Then something exploded in Martin Hoganson's brain; and as the automobile came to a stop the watchers knew—if they gave it thought—that all the money in the world would not restore the breath of life to that lump of sudden clay.

The Bloodstained Parasol

A Study in Madness

By JAMES RAVENSCROFT

WITHIN the room were sounds that were unpleasant to hear. They were dreadful maniacal shouts of command, shrill cries of terror, the more awful because constantly broken by hoarseness, and moanings of infinite tenderness and sadness.

"He is in one of his spells," the attendant said. "Perhaps it would be just as well not to see him now. It is not a picture that you would want to carry with you."

The attendant's voice was one of gentle solicitude and pathos. Doubtless long service in the place had made it so. It was a private sanitarium, in the National Capital, for the hopelessly insane, to which my profession as specialist and alienist gained me admittance.

The sounds hypnotized me; I could not turn away. The small iron grating in the upper part of the door drew me like a magnet, and I went and looked into the room.

A pale-faced, emaciated, wild-looking man, standing in the middle of a bare mattress on a heavy iron bedstead, was yelling and gesticulating madly at some imaginary object at the bottom of the door.

"Get away, curse you, get away!" he cried frantically. "Begone, you brute! Out of my sight! Would to God I had burned you as fine as ashes! *Oh-h-h-h-h! Oh-h-h-h-h!*"

The groans which ended the fury cannot be described; they were those of a soul in agony. His whole appearance was that of one convulsed with a terror as of death.

At first he did not see me as I peered through the grating; his eyes, bright with the glitter of madness, were fixed in a fearful stare at the bottom of the door.

"It is over for a while," said the attendant.

The words roused the man and he raised his eyes to the grating. A wan smile of relief broke the expression of horror on his face, and he at once stepped off the bed and came to the door. A beady sweat, not the kind caused by heat, though the day was sultry, was on his brow and upper lip, and his body relaxing from the tension of the spell, was shaking with a nervous palsy. He was clad in pajamas of some coarse white material and his feet were bare.

"Pardon me," he spoke in low tones and with an accent of breeding, "but that infernal dog distracted my attention and I didn't see you. I'm glad you came. I remember you quite well, indeed. You were doing interne work, were you not?"

I yielded to his humor, grateful that I could help to ease his tortured spirit, and nodded affirmatively.

The glitter in his eyes seemed to be intensified, and putting his face almost against the grating, as though he meant his speech to be confidential, he said:

"Perhaps you saw *her?*" His voice was almost a whisper. "*She* came in when I was dissecting. I was always dissecting, then, always dissecting. Understand? I cut things up, alive and dead, dead and alive. That was the beginning of the hell."

He said it so sanely, so remorsefully that I, startled, looked closely at him. Reason appeared to be reinstated on her throne. Then he broke out again.

"I cut them to pieces, but I didn't burn the pieces and they escaped, out of the windows, through the keyhole. They even hid in the pockets of my clothes until I was on the street, and then they would leap out and dart away."

He moistened his thin, dry lips with his tongue and took hold of the bars of the grating, and went on:

"No, I didn't burn the pieces and they escaped. That dog follows me in pieces. At night its feet scratch at the bottom of the door and its eyes look in between the bars of this window. Its red, dripping tongue lies on the bed beside me and its hot, horrible breath smothers me. Its footsteps trot up and down the floor and its hellish moans and whines drive me crazy. *Listen! It was alive. That's why she struck me!* A soft, white thing it was, and I threw up my hand and caught it. She dropped it and I took it and kept it. That's it, standing in the corner over there."

Involuntarily I shuddered and looked toward the corner designated by his gesture. There was nothing in any of the corners.

"And after the dog is gone, *she* comes. *She* comes slipping, slipping. I can't hear *her*, I can't see *her*. She comes to get *her* parasol. But when *she* see the bloodstains on it *she* turns to a ghost. I try to wash the stains out, but I can't. Every time I put water on them they spread."

He leaned closer to the bars, and with one eye cautiously on the attendant, he whispered:

"I'm working on a solution that will entirely remove the bloodstains, so *she* will take the parasol, for when she does the dog will leave, and then I can get a long, quiet rest."

He paused and looked furtively around the room, and then began his awful babblings again.

He called piteously after me as the attendant took my arm and drew me away. I remembered little else that I saw in the sanitarium.

"Tell me about him," I implored, as soon as we were out of hearing of his cries. "Who is he? How did he come to be here?"

The attendant hesitated.

"Not every one should hear that story," he remarked, thoughtfully, as if half talking to himself, "but, of course, with you, a specialist, it is different."

He took me to a chair on a porch. From there I could see into a section of the grounds of the inmates, where benighted beings were engaged in assuming their various and fantastic roles of madness.

"HIS name I shall not tell you," he began, "for that is a secret and very properly so. I shall only relate briefly what happened to him, as it came to me from his mother. His people are prominent and wealthy. It wrecked his mother's life, but the only thing that could be done was to give him up to this place. When they come here to see him they wait until he is comparatively free from symptoms of an attack, and then they go look in at the grating, as you did. Strange to tell, he recognizes only one of them, a sister, but he believes her to be a sister who died some two or three years before he became insane.

"Every possible care is given him and every famous specialist in the country has examined him. They say it is useless to hope; that he will be raving mad to the end of his days. When the fury seizes him he will hurl at his imaginary tormentors anything he can lift. That is why his room has nothing in it but a bed, and that is fastened to the floor with heavy cleats. The mattress, made of material that resists his nails, is securely attached to steel slats riveted to the bed frame, and there is no covering. Blankets, spreads, pillows and sheets were given him at first and he rent them to tatters fighting the 'dog.' In the winter his room is kept so warm that covering is not needed.

"His was accounted one of the brightest minds at the medical college in which he was a professor. It was predicted that he would do great things in surgery. He was making a special research in the field of vivisection. As he himself says, every time he can get some one to listen, that was the beginning of the hell.

"He was engaged to marry one of the loveliest young women of his city. From what I was told, she was as lovely in spirit as she was in peron. The woman, it was said, was the real force that moved his work at such amazing strides. He was eager to give her of the very best of his energies and talents.

"As a quiet and close observer of life, I am sometimes almost persuaded to believe in fate. The story is that a whim possessed his fiancée to 'go through' the medical college, just, I presume, as a whim possessed you to go through this place. She said nothing to him of her intention for she wanted to surprise him.

"Two girl friends accompanied her, and together they explored. An attendant, who must have been exceedingly careless, was directing them, and at a certain place in their adventure fate willed that he should be called elsewhere for a few minutes. In those few minutes a man was doomed to madness, a woman's heart was broken, and several lives were made desolate.

"THE place where the attendant left them was in a corridor by the laboratory where dissecting and other experimental work was done. The doctor's fiancée opened a door of the room and peeped in. At the opposite side a man with his back to her was working over some object. She at once recognized the familiar figure, and, as fate would have it, she was seized with the caprice to steal up behind him. Telling her companions who he was, and bidding them wait in the corridor for the attendant, she went in, softly closed the door and noiselessly tiptoed along the aisle between benches.

"If there had been more light—but why say 'if,' other than *if* fate had not taken her there that day? Her lightly-slippered feet made no sound and she stood behind him unnoticed. He *might* have heard, but he was deeply engrossed in his work.

"She tilted slightly on one foot to look past him at the object which so held his attention. She gazed a moment, and then, as though forgetting his presence, she sprang to his side. A dog was stretched on the dissecting board. How she discovered the fact is a mystery, unless she saw with the inner and more penetrating vision, but she *did* see evidences of life in an animal that had been carefully prepared, by all the modern methods, as a subject for the dissector.

"The doctor dropped his instrument and stood staring at her, speechless. Had she dropped from above he could not have been more amazed and startled.

"'It is alive!' the girl gasped.

"'Yes,' he admitted. 'You had better not look at it. Please come away. How did you get here?'

"The girl never moved nor took her eyes from him.

"'It is in the interest of the science of saving and preserving human life,' he began to explain. No doubt a cold fear was creeping into his heart at the sight of her. 'It is done in nearly all colleges and hospitals, you know. The animal is under a powerful anesthetic and does not feel pain.'

"A moment more she stood, so the tale goes, as though transfixed, and then—

"'You fiend, you coward!' she screamed, as she struck him in the face with her parasol. She swung it with all her strength for a second blow and he threw up his hands to ward it off. There were red smears where he touched it, and when she saw them she flung the parasol from her and swooned.

"Her companions, from where they were waiting in the corridor, heard the scream and the commotion, and rushed in just as the doctor was picking her up, and ran after him as he carried her to another room. He told them that she had fainted at the sight of the dissecting table.

"It was a fatal day for the doctor. In his excitement he had forgotten to wipe his hands before he lifted the girl, and there were red finger marks on her white dress. Almost as soon as she revived she saw them, and swooned again. And when she again revived she began trying to tear off the dress, like she had lost her reason. One of her companions telephoned to her home and fresh clothes were brought. It was perhaps all of an hour later when, sick and too weak to walk, she was carried from the room to which the doctor had taken her.

"That was the end. The doctor pleaded with the girl's father and mother, but in vain. She never again permitted him to see her. She said she would as soon marry a murderer. Night after night he paced the sidewalk in front of her home, and went away only when the lateness of the hour and the vacancy of the street made him conspicuous.

"He gave up his college work, neglected his personal appearance, and at last became like a haunted man. Many dark tales of what had happened were whispered among friends and acquaintances of the two families. The girl became a nervous wreck and finally her people broke up their home and moved to a distant city.

"Then something in the doctor's brain cracked, and, well—you have seen for yourself."

He arose, a gentle reminder that he could not then spare me more of his time. As we shook hands in parting, he said:

"Vivisection may, possibly, be of service to medical and surgical science, but it has nothing to do with love."

THE EYRIE

WEIRD adventures, it seems, are not confined to the printed page. Life is full of them. And quite often the unusual things that actually happen are even more remarkable than the strange events (wholly fictitious) that you encounter in WEIRD TALES.

In our mail this morning are letters from persons who not only read WEIRD TALES—and enjoy reading it and tell us so—but who also can speak, from first-hand knowledge, of weird experiences. And they enjoy these, too, and likewise write to tell us about them.

We remarked last month, in this department, that almost everybody likes to read a weird tale occasionally. And now, after going through our morning mail, we feel urged to add that people also like to live them.

Among these letters that we mention is one from Zahrah E. Preble of New York City, who recently joined the Hendricks-Hodge Archeological Expedition that journeyed to New Mexico for the purpose of digging into the prehistoric customs of an ancient people. Miss Preble is now with the expedition at Zuni, New Mexico, and from there she writes us thus:

"My dear Mr. Baird: I am convinced that the Zunis are adepts at rain making. The sky had been cloudless until the old priests started to the Sacred Lake, 60 miles away. Then faint wisps began to form into clouds. But no rain fell until day before yesterday, when the rain priests from Zuni came out to the sacred spring in Ojo Caliente, and met the returning pilgrims from the Sacred Lake. Here we were allowed to witness a most wonderfully impressive and reverent ceremony. I think we are perhaps the only white people, with the exception of Frank Hamilton Cushing and Mrs. Matilda Stevenson, who have ever been allowed to see this part of the ceremony. But our camp was given not only that privilege, but the one of taking motion pictures of it, so that the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, would have the record. Before we left the mountain side the rain was falling in torrents.

"Yesterday the ceremony was augmented by the more spectacular and better-known 'Rain Dance,' in Zuni. It is a beautiful and solemn performance. Rain fell last night in copious quantities. Today it is raining as I write this, and the music of the waters is drumming on my tent fly. I say that the Zunis are great rain makers, and that Faith is the keynote of their ability!

"So far, I have been too busy absorbing new sights and sounds to do much writing, but, if the wind does not blow too hard each day, I hope to accomplish something before long.

"There is an interesting historical tale of the murder of Father Latrado, right in front of the old Spanish Mission church, in 1670, which is one of the most picturesque parts of the Hawikuh ruins. Perhaps I can reconstruct that scene sufficiently weirdly to make a good yarn for you. I will keep it in mind."

Those of our readers who are intrigued by the occult—and we believe that many of them are—will probably be interested in the next letter, which comes from F. A. Ells-Over of San Diego, California:

"Dear Friend: I fully realize that the death of Captain Buckman (in the accompanying story) is seemingly far from logical. Not that I believe, personally, that it is possible; yet some occultists concede the actuality of such phenomena.

"I obtained the idea for this weird climax in an occult paper the name of which I have forgotten—it is so long ago—but I could not forget the article. It was an account of a materializing seance, at which a well known medium was successfully evoking physical manifestations of the dead. Closely watched, he could plainly be seen in his cabinet; and the phantasm of a dear departed male was taking form.

"In the group was a young, impetuous fellow who had never before dabbled in that sort of thing—and he was scared stiff. The thing had become substance, objectively, now, and it ambled slowly toward the young man.

"It came closer. The boy's hair stood straight up. The thing brushed his sleeve as it passed, sending strange shivers up his spine. With a yell, he lashed out with a mean left to the phantom's right eye; then closed with it, wrestling. The thing disintegrated in his arms. He fainted. But—

"The next day the medium was very sick and used up. And his right eye was black as black can be!

"That is the article. I can't vouch for its truth; but it is as near as I can remember a true account of the piece I read years ago in that occult paper. Evidently the medium had materialized his own Astral body, and the blow reflected in his physical shell. Science claims that the witches of old used this same process.

"At any rate, dear Ed. (coincidence, the abbreviation of your name and occupation are the same!) I send this in for what it is worth. They say nothing is impossible, and who sabes the occult?

"And if nothing is impossible—and if you leave

your glasses t'home—you MIGHT consider this story for pub.

"N. B.—Anyway, you started something when your magazine made its first appearance. At least with me. Man, it's a whangdoodle—that's what it is! I bought your first issue through curiosity; I've purchased the following ones by design. . . You don't need my good luck wishes. All who have read my copies (I pass them around to my friends) have become fans."

Still another letter concerning eerie things in real life comes from Curtis F. Day, of 38 Browning Road, Somerville, Mass., and here it is:

"My Dear Mr. Baird: I have just been reading your second issue of WEIRD TALES. It's just the kind of magazine I hoped would start sometime. I think it fascinatingly interesting.

"One of the most weird experiences that a man or woman can have is that of being buried alive. I have been greatly interested in this matter and have collected a deal of material along this line. Would not a department of authentic cases of living burial interest your readers? I have talked with two people who were buried alive, but were rescued in time and the account of their hallucinations and feelings is about as weird as anything I ever read in Poe or any of the older writers. I also have the facts in many other cases."

And Catherine H. Griggs, of 69 Randolph Avenue, Waterbury, Conn., dwells, in her letter to us, on both the aforementioned subjects. This is what she has to say:

"My Dear Mr. Baird: WEIRD TALES seems to fill a much needed place in modern fiction, already overrun with detective stories, or those of the 'confession' type. If you keep your magazine to its present policy it should be a great success. The contents of the first number are most pleasing and show better literary quality than the average short story. . .

"May I, as an admiring reader, venture a suggestion—if it seems practical? As a member of the Society for Psychic Research, I happen to know that they have many really absorbing short stories, published in the monthly Journal, told in the first person by the individual who had the experience. I do not know what legal red tape surrounds such matters, but, if possible, I think it would be interesting to have just one such story in each issue of WEIRD TALES, quoted directly from the Society for Psychic Research. . .

"In the November, 1918, issue, for instance, I wrote an account of how my mother and aunt seemed to see a ghost in an old hotel in Vienna. Later they learned that the hotel had been the residence of the Dukes of Wurtemberg, and their rooms were part of the private suite; and the old gentleman seen by my aunt was identified by her from the likeness of a portrait statue on the stairs. She had not seen the statue before she saw the old man."

WE take it that all our readers enjoyed Paul Ellsworth Triem's thrilling serial, "The Evening Wolves," which we published in our last two issues; and, assuming that you will likewise be interested in what he has to say about us, also about weird fiction in general, we have pleasure in quoting this letter from him:

"Dear Mr. Baird: I intended to send you this story last week, but some trade paper business came up that had to be covered at once. At any rate, here it is now. If you like it and want more, better let me know as soon as convenient.

"We—the Triem family—have just been giving the second number of WEIRD TALES a thorough reading, and I want to congratulate you on it. In some ways we are the typical American family. We want everything in a story—thrills, plausibility, convincingness, live characters and a concrete and effective background. Of course, not all of the stories in the magazine achieved all of these impossibilities, but a surprising number did. We read aloud, and that is a more severe test than reading silently. I think we were particularly surprised at the number of first-class stories you had secured from little known writers.

"And the theory back of WEIRD TALES is scientifically sound. Ninety-nine people out of one hundred in America today are suffering from balked dispositions—inhibitions—suppressions. We are cave men, but this disease of civilization has been too much for us. We want to go out and knock down our dinner with a stone hammer, and instead we have to go to the cafeteria and carry a tray. Strong emotional situations are as necessary to us as sunshine and fresh air; and the only place we can get them is in our reading. Of late years the silly publishers have decreed that we may not even have this solace—and now comes Weird. May it live long, and prosper!"

Equally interesting is the letter from H. P. Lovecraft, another master of the weird tale, from whom we have accepted some stories for your entertainment. Mr. Lovecraft's letter, unlike Mr. Triem's, doesn't exactly flatter WEIRD TALES, but we are nevertheless glad to pass it on to you:

"My Dear Sir: Having a habit of writing weird, macabre, and fantastic stories for my own amusement, I have lately been simultaneously hounded by nearly a dozen well-meaning friends into deciding to submit a few of these Gothic horrors to your newly-founded periodical. The decision is herewith carried out. Enclosed are five tales written between 1917 and 1923.

"Of these the first two are probably the best. If they be unsatisfactory, the rest need not be read. . . 'The Statement of Randolph Carter' is, in the main, an actual dream experienced on the night of December 21-22, 1919; the characters being myself (Randolph Carter) and my friend, Samuel Love-

"Why Mrs. Blakely —*How Do You Do!*"

He had met her only once before. Some one had presented him at a reception both had attended. He had conversed with her a little, danced with her once. And now, two weeks later, he sees her approaching with a young lady whom he surmises is her daughter.
"Why, Mrs. Blakely, how do you do!" he exclaims, rushing forward impulsively. But, Mrs. Blakely, accustomed to the highest degree of courtesy at all times, returns his greeting coldly.
And nodding briefly, she passes on—leaving the young man angry with her, but angrier with himself for blundering at the very moment he wanted most to create a favorable impression.

DO *you* know what to say to a woman when meeting her for the first time after an introduction? Do you know what to say to a woman when leaving her after an introduction? Would you say "Good-bye, I am very glad to have met you?" Or, if she said that to you, how would you answer?

It is just such little unexpected situations like these that take us off our guard and expose us to sudden embarrassments. None of us like to do the wrong thing, the incorrect thing. It condemns us as ill-bred. It makes us ill at ease when we should be well poised. It makes us self-conscious and uncomfortable when we should be calm, self-possessed, confident of ourselves.

The knowledge of what to do and say on all occasions is the greatest personal asset any man or woman can have. It protects against the humiliation of conspicuous blunders. It acts as an armor against the rudeness of others. It gives an ease of manner, a certain calm dignity and self-possession that people recognize and respect.

Little Blunders That Take Us Off Our Guard

There are so many problems of conduct constantly arising. How should asparagus be eaten? How should the finger-bowl be used, the napkin, the fork and knife? Whose name should be mentioned first when making an introduction? How should invitations be worded? How should the home be decorated for a wedding? What clothes should be taken on a trip to the South?

In public, at the theatre, at the dance, on the train—wherever we go and with whomever we happen to be, we encounter problems that make it necessary for us to hold ourselves well in hand, to be prepared, to know *exactly what to do and say.*

Do You Ever Feel That You Don't "Belong"?

Perhaps you have been to a party lately, or a dinner, or a reception of some kind. Were you entirely at ease, sure of yourself, confident that you would not do or say anything that others would recognize as ill-bred?

Or, were you self-conscious, afraid of doing or saying the wrong thing, constantly on the alert—never wholly comfortable for a minute?

Many people feel "alone" in a crowd, out of place. They do not know how to make strangers like them—how to *create a good first impression.* When they are introduced they do not know how to start conversation flowing smoothly and naturally. At the dinner table they feel constrained, embarrassed. Somehow they always feel that they don't "belong."

Let the Book of Etiquette Be Your Social Guide

For your own happiness, for your own peace of mind and your own ease, it is important that you know definitely the accepted rules of conduct in all public places.

It is not expensive dress that counts most in social circles—but correct manner, knowledge of social form. Nor is it particularly clever speech that wins the largest audiences. If one knows the little secrets of *entertaining conversation,* if one is able to say always the right thing at the right time, one cannot help being a pleasing and ever-welcome guest.

The Book of Etiquette, social secretary to thousands of men and women, makes it possible for every one to do, say, write and wear always that which is absolutely correct and in good form—gives to every one a new ease and poise of manner, a new self-confidence and assurance. It smooths away the little crudities—does amazing things in the matter of *self-cultivation.*

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Take advantage of the important special-edition, low-price offer made elsewhere on this page. Send today for your set of the famous Book of Etiquette. These two valuable volumes will protect you from embarrassments, give you new ease and poise of manner, tell you exactly what to do, say, write and wear on every occasion.

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Garden City, New York

I am glad to know of the special low-price edition of the Book of Etiquette. You may send me these two volumes without any money in advance. When they arrive I will give the postman only $1.98 (plus a few cents postage) in full payment—instead of the regular price of $3.50. I am to have the privilege of returning the Book of Etiquette any time within 5 days if I am not delighted with it.

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man, the poet and editor of 'Twenty-one Letters of Ambrose Bierce.'

"I have no idea that these things will be found suitable, for I pay no attention to the demands of commercial writing. My object is such pleasure as I can obtain from the creation of certain bizarre pictures, situations, or atmospheric effects; and the only reader I hold in mind is myself.

"My models are invariably the older writers, especially Poe, who has been my favorite literary figure since early childhood. Should any miracle impel you to consider the publication of my tales, I have but one condition to offer; and that is that no excisions be made. If the tale can not be printed as written, down to the very last semicolon and comma, it must gracefully accept rejection. Excision by editors is probably one reason why no living American author has a real prose style. . . But I am probably safe, for my MSS. are not likely to win your consideration. 'Dagon' has been rejected by —— ——, to which I sent it under external impulsion—much as I am sending you the enclosed. This magazine sent me a beautifully tinted and commendably impersonal rejection slip. . .

"I like WEIRD TALES very much, though I have seen only the April number. Most of the stories, of course, are more or less commercial—or should I say conventional?—in technique, but they all have an enjoyable angle. 'Beyond the Door,' by Paul Suter, seems to me the most truly touched with the elusive quality of original genius—though 'A Square of Canvas,' by Anthony M. Rud, would be a close second if not so reminiscent in denouement of Balzac's 'Le Chef d'Ouvre inconnu'—as I recall it across a lapse of years, without a copy at hand. However, one doesn't expect a very deep thrill in this sophisticated and tradesman-minded age. Arthur Machen is the only living man I know of who can stir truly profound and spiritual horror."

Despite the foregoing, or because of it, we are using some of Mr. Lovecraft's unusual stories, and you will find his "Dagon" in the next issue of WEIRD TALES.

AND now let us turn from these letters from authors and consider those from our readers. Here's one concerning last month's issue that impresses us quite favorably:

"Dear Mr. Baird: Long live WEIRD TALES! A more enjoyable magazine I have yet to find. And as I read about eight fiction magazines monthly, this, in a way, is something of a compliment. I just started reading your spooky book last month, but I am loud in praise and heartily wish you unparalleled success.

"I finished the July-August number last night, and I thought that 'The Room of the Black Velvet Drapes' and 'Mandrake' to be the best. In 'The Outcasts' I found nothing weird, or anything else that would distinguish it from any other piece of fiction. 'Shades' and also 'The Corpse on the Third Slab' were very good, but I hesitate to read any of these stories late at night.

"I found 'The Moon Terror' one of the most fascinating stories I ever read. Also, 'The Man the Law Forgot.'

"I see there is quite a heated discussion going on as to the size of your magazine, so I'll cast my vote, also. I like it large, because you don't have to be turning pages all the time.

"Well, doubtless you are thinking this is enough criticism for one letter, so I will close, again wishing you a great success."—Just Another Weird One.

And here are two more that deal with a subject that we've been discussing here of late—namely, the popular fondness for weird fiction:

"Dear Sir: I have read, with a great deal of interest, the first two copies of your new magazine, WEIRD TALES, and must say that I am delighted that there is, at last, such a magazine on the market. I have always had a great tendency toward reading stories of this sort, and Edgar Allan Poe is my favorite author, but Anthony M. Rud may soon take his place.

"I have often wondered why there were so very few stories in the current magazines dealing in this subject and can not understand why they never accepted them, but I think you have made a great stride in the literature of our day by publishing a magazine devoted to 'horrors.' If I am not mistaken, the public really likes to read something that appeals to their imagination; something they can not understand, and I do not doubt that the 'Unique Magazine' will give them all they want of this in the future. But, according to my mind, its success will depend largely on VARIETY, and your discernment, so far, is faultless in this respect. I am looking forward to reading the next issue with great impatience. Indeed, I wish it was a weekly instead of a monthly periodical."—Charles White, 52 St. John Street, Quebec City, Canada.

"Dear Sir: I would like to say just a word in appreciation of your unique publication, WEIRD TALES. I believe you have, in this magazine, satisfied a popular craving for fiction that is different and out of the ordinary, especially enjoyed by people possessed of a bit of imagination. Personally, I have enjoyed WEIRD TALES more than any fiction magazine I have ever read.

"And by the way, I haven't seen many letters in your 'Eyrie' from the rest of my sex. But just because you haven't received as many letters of appreciation from the women as from the men, don't think that we don't enjoy Poe's type of literature as well as they."—Maxine Worthington, Lincoln, Nebraska.

AND here are some excerpts—we really haven't space for more—clipped from another batch:

"Dear Mr. Baird: I, too, must add a word of commendation to the man who has courage enough

Discovers New Way To Teach Salesmanship in 20 Weeks!

After fifteen years an amazing new method has been formulated whereby it is possible for any ambitious man to get into this fascinating and best paid of all professions in 20 weeks.

By J. E. Greenslade

HERE is the biggest discovery that has been made since men first began to prepare themselves for selling positions through spare time study at home.

After fifteen years intensive study the National Demonstration Method has been perfected—and men can now step into a selling position inside of twenty weeks—with years of practical experience *in their heads*.

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For the sales problems which every salesman meets during his experience have all been charted and the most masterful way to handle each of these 64 conditions is shown you. In addition to the National Demonstration Method you will get the same wonderful groundwork of selling and business knowledge which has been responsible for the success of thousands in the past.

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This is the method that enabled Wagner—a fireman—without any previous business training or without any fluency as a talker—to exchange his shovel for a sample case and to exchange his poorly paid hard-working situation for the most fascinating of all professions; with a salary of $7,000 a year.

After 3 months' study, in his spare time, at home, it enabled H. D. Miller, of Chicago, a stenographer, to step out of a $100 a month job right into a $100 a week position.

And I could cite hundreds of other instances, where these remarkable changes from poorly paid positions into this high salaried profession have been made after from 12 to 20 weeks of this easy, fascinating study. Men in every walk of life have made this change—farmers, laborers, mechanics, bookkeepers, ministers—and even physicians and lawyers have found that Salesmanship paid such large rewards and could be learned so quickly by this new method that they have preferred to ignore the years they spent in reading law or studying medicine and have become master salesmen.

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Are you tired of doing routine work which wears a man out long before his time? Are you tired of the daily monotonous grind at a salary that makes it impossible to get any of life's luxuries whatever? Are you tired of the uncertainty of permanence which is always a feature of the average clerical position? Then why not decide to enter the profession where the earnings are high—where the constant demand for good salesmen insure that one may never fear loss of a position and where the work is so fascinating that it is like playing an interesting game and getting paid for it?

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Send me free book "Modern Salesmanship" which explains the New Demonstration Method and shows how I can become a Master Salesman. This does not obligate me in any way.

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Age _____ Occupation _____

to edit a magazine dealing so largely in stories of psychic phenomena. . . For years I have read and studied everything obtainable on matters occult and regretted the lack of a good fiction magazine filled with such tales. Enclosed please find 25c for a copy of the back number containing 'The Dead Man's Tale.' Isn't that the story you consider the masterpiece of weird stories?"—Pearl Bratton, 2615 Y Street, Sacramento, California.

"Dear Sir: Let me compliment you on your magazine, WEIRD TALES. Since the very first issue, I have not missed a story. I take it to bed about midnight and read the most bloodthirsty one I can find just to get a 'kick.' 'The Closed Cabinet' is, in my opinion, the most powerful horror story you have published. It was superbly written, and with the atmosphere, setting and all, made a typical weird tale. 'The Ghost Guard' by Irvine was a crackerjack of a yarn. The serial you are running now attracts me a great deal. I am sure that any reader who has an appetite for extravaganza will find just what he wants in that serial. . . Wishing you all success for DETECTIVE TALES and WEIRD TALES."—Dick P. Tooker, Library Apartments, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"Dear Sir: Both my husband and I read every story and enjoyed every one. We particularly liked 'Fear' and the 'The Grave,' and the others which were not too far beyond the bounds of probability. 'The Dead Man's Tale' was very thrilling. . . You certainly told the truth when you said that people like to read this sort of fiction,' and we are glad that you have not hesitated to become a pioneer, as it were, in presenting to the public a magazine that is fearless enough to feature such unusual stories. . . Here's to success for WEIRD TALES!" —Mrs. E. L. Depew, 1235 Hyde St., San Francisco.

"Dear Editor: The yarns by Rud, Craigie and Wright were certainly good thrilling stories. 'The Scar,' by Carl Ramus, 'The Bodymaster,' by Harold Ward, and 'The Forty Jars,' by Ray McGillivray were exceptionally good. 'The Dead Man's Tale,' by Willard E. Hawkins, 'The Ape Man,' by James B. M. Clark, Jr., and 'The Experiment of Dr. Calf Calgroni,' by Faus and Wooding were well-constructed horror yarns."—John James Arthur, Jr., Oak Grove Farm, Coleman, Texas.

"Gentlemen: I am enclosing twenty-five cents for which please send me a copy of the first issue of WEIRD TALES. That is the only issue I have missed. Believe me, I'm not going to miss any more! Your magazine is great. Please print some scientific stories. 'The Moon Terror' was great. Get more like that. . . Please rush me the copy as fast as you can. If necessary, mark it 'Via Air Mail.' "—William Moesel, 80 Broadway, New York City.

"Dear Sir: I lived seven years in a really haunted house. No fake about it. Some queer happenings. Some pretty hard to believe, but we lived there and knew them. I even had my arms about the creature one night. You can laugh! It was rather a shuddery remembrance afterward."—V. Van Blascom Parke, Arlington Heights, Mass.

"Gentlemen: I have enjoyed reading the first issue of your magazine, and I am quite delighted to find it so uniquely uniform in tone, and so uniformly unique in its escape from certain useless conventions by which most periodicals of the all-fiction type are governed."—C. D. Bradley, 5830 East Seventeenth Street, Oakland, California.

"Dear Mr. Baird: I wish to say here that I am highly in favor of WEIRD TALES. I appreciate its merits, and wish to co-operate in whatever way possible to establish its success. There is absolutely no other magazine like it on the market, and it fills a great need. The public owes you a vote of thanks for placing before them such an excellent and needed magazine. WEIRD TALES indeed has a very bright future."—R. Linwood Lancaster, P. O. Box 687, Raleigh, North Carolina.

"My Dear Mr. Baird: I preferred 'The Moon Terror' to all the other stories, but they were all good with few exceptions. Some of the stories do not live up to the name, 'weird.' Is it possible to procure the first two issues, March and April? If so, what is the cost? If you haven't them, perhaps some reader would like to sell them."—H. Cusick, 2392 Valentine Avenue, New York City.

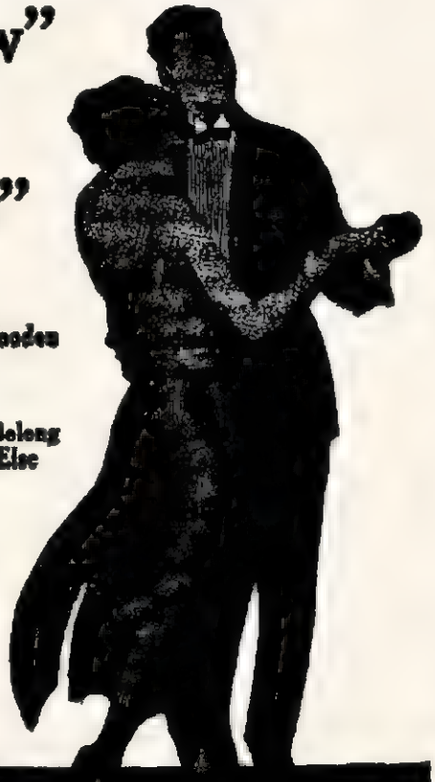
"Dear Sir: I have just read the first copy of WEIRD TALES that I ever saw. While walking down Market Street a few days ago I passed a book store deeply engrossed in a subject quite foreign to the grotesque. The title of your magazine gripped my attention to such an extent that I stopped automatically after having gone a half dozen yards. Standing there momentarily, WEIRD TALES drove the other topic away and framed itself vividly in my mind's eye, and I retraced my steps and bought the copy. You have certainly put forth a fetching title, and, it seems to me, already laid the foundation for a financial success, comparable in a short time to that of The Saturday Evening Post."—V. H. Bethell, 718 Howard Street, San Francisco.

We could go on and fill several more pages with enthusiastic letters from our happy readers, for we've scores of such letters here; but we shall have to forego that pleasure and use an inch or so more of wood pulp paper to remind you that frosty evenings approach, with the long winter evenings coming close behind, and that means you will have more time for reading WEIRD TALES. Anticipating this, we are preparing a bountiful feast of fiction for our Autumn and Winter numbers. We expect to make these numbers better than any we have thus far published.

THE EDITOR.

"Yes! We Have No Bananas!"

"Who's Sorry Now"
"I Love Me"
"Barney Google"



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- Swingin' Down the Lane
- Yes! We Have No Bananas
- Bambalina
- Wild Flower
- Barney Google
- Carolina in the Morning
- Who's Sorry Now
- Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Sheap
- I Love Me
- Parade of the Wooden Soldiers
- Sun Kist Rose
- You Know You Belong To Somebody Else

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Readers who have had a hand in strange adventures, or who have been victims of experiences of a startling and terrifying nature, are cordially invited to send accounts of them to THE CAULDRON. A concrete idea of what is desired may be ascertained by reading this month's contributions. Manuscripts may be as horrible and hair-raising as it is in the power of the author to make them, but they must be clean from a moral standpoint. Those accepted will be paid for at our usual rate. Tell your story clearly and briefly. Double-spaced, typewritten manuscripts are preferred, but those in long hand will be considered if legibly written. No manuscript will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped and self addressed envelope.

PAT McCLOSKY'S GHOST

IN ONE of the most rugged sections of central Pennsylvania, along the West Branch of the Susquehanna river, there is an old story-and-a-half log cabin. It is surrounded by neglected fruit trees and a heavy undergrowth that has been there so long that it encroaches on the doors and windows.

The cabin is entered through a small hall, or vestibule. The one large room, which occupies the rest of the first floor, opens from this hall. A steep staircase also leads from the vestibule to the attic-like second floor.

Pat McClosky had built this cabin shortly after the Civil War. He was a mean, tight-fisted Irishman, whose occupation was farming, but who was shrewd enough to have come by many ill-gotten gains through trading. Money was his dearest possession. This he kept hidden in various places about the premises.

One day, after Pat had lived there alone for about thirty-five years, his nearest neighbor, who lived over a mile away, found him dead in front of his doorstep with a knife wound in his back.

Many stories have since been circulated among the people of the community—stories of how Pat McClosky's ghost comes to the cabin at night. For this reason, the place has remained vacant.

Not believing in ghosts, two friends and I rented this deserted cabin for a couple of weeks during the fishing season. We agreed to meet there the first day; but, when I arrived, I found a message which stated that neither of my friends would be with me until the following day. This left me to spend the first night alone. I was tired; and, just as it was getting dark, I lay down on one of the cots and fell asleep.

A heavy clap of thunder awoke me. It was beginning to rain. As the wind was blowing drops of water in my face, I jumped up and closed the window. When I turned to get back into my cot, a flash of lightning lit up the room and, through the half-open door, showed a glimpse of a figure in the hall.

"Pat's ghost!" flashed in my mind as I stood there in the darkness. Then, with three steps, I reached the door, slammed it shut, and bolted it.

Recovering from my fright, I stood leaning against the closed door and said aloud to myself, "What's the matter with me? I must have been dreaming."

But my reasoning did not entirely reassure me; for, when I wiped cold perspiration from my face I still thought that I certainly had seeen something. I lit my acetylene lamp. Then I opened my suitcase, took out my flash-light and an automatic pistol, and placed them near my pillow.

With these, I again laughed at my foolishness. For fully twenty minutes I sat trying to solve the mystery. The wind went *whoo-whee-whoo* through the chinks of the logs. Vivid flashes of lightning showed the bushes bending in the storm. The rain beat against the window. Sharp claps of thunder ended in heavy rumblings. Finally, I put out the light and lay down again, trying to dismiss the thought that Pat McClosky's ghost was slinking about me that night.

It was not long, however, until I was again startled. This time it was a noise in the attic. It sounded like the dragging of an inert body across the floor. This was followed by heavy thumps such as might be made with a padded hammer. Sitting up, I reached and got the flash-light and the automatic.

Again, I heard the noise. This time I jumped from my cot. The sound lasted longer, and the dragging sound was followed by light footsteps. A few moments later the same noise came from the hall outside my door. I was too numb with fright to move. I expected the door to open any second. Then I collected my nerve enough to snap on my light and level my gun to shoot. As my finger touched the trigger, the thought came to me that it might be a human being.

"Who's there?" I called, trying to keep my voice as calm as possible so I would not betray my fright. There was no answer. "I'm going to open the door and shoot," I cried, stepping nearer. "I give you fair warning."

The only reply was soft footsteps and three thumps. I slid back the bolt and flung the door wide open. As I did so, I must have snapped off my light, for I was left in black darkness. I shrank back from the opening almost paralyzed with fear. The footsteps came toward me. A rustling sound and the thumping was repeated. I fumbled with the electric lamp. The light flashed into the hall. I saw a long-haired, white dog scratching fleas.

J. P. CRONISTER.

THE VELVET DEATH

WHILE taking news weeklies for the Pathe Film Company near Constantinople, I had an unusual adventure which is rather difficult to relate. In fact, I never mention it except in the presence of close friends for fear of being dubbed peculiar. To the east of Constantinople stretches a desolate region of waste and sand. Nomadic tribes form the sole population of this arid region. While making a film showing departing troops, I had a valuable fur overcoat stolen by some bandits. With the coat went my quarter's pay, which I had thrust inside one of the pockets. Well armed, and accompanied by two friends, I pursued the robbers and recovered my property.

Night gives no warning of its approach in Turkey, but comes with startling suddenness when the sun drops past the horizon. To one who is accustomed to the softer shading of twilight, the close of day in the treeless wastes of Turkey is something of an experience. We noted the disappearing sun and began to look around for a suitable spot to camp. An oasis lay to our right and we made for it.

We were passing a camp of nomads when we were stopped by a toothless hag, who told us brokenly that she was a soothsayer. Baron, one of my friends, gave her a coin to humor her and we started on our way; but she would not have it so. She told us emphatically, as best she could, that it was death to sleep in the spot we had chosen. She said that any one, who ventured to sleep in the shelter of the wicked one, was visited by the Velvet Death—that he never opened his eyes again in this world. Baron could speak Turkish much better than I, and it was to him that she told the tale. Of course we went ahead as we had planned, just as any one else would have done.

After it had grown quite dark, we sat around the campfire which blazed cheerfully, and it was then that we spoke of the old hag's warning. Baron scoffed about it, but Pickett, the other member of our party, was not so skeptical. He began talking of other weird, unaccountable adventures which he had experienced in different parts of the world, for he had been something of a wanderer all his life. Soon, he had us decidedly nervous.

At last, we decided to keep a night watch,

and drew lots to see which one should stay up the first part of the night. The lot fell to me. I remember how I tried to shake off the feeling of impending doom that seemed to hover over our little camp. After the others had turned in, I tried to keep my mind from dwelling on the old hag's warning, but I could not forget her or her evident sincerity in trying to prevent us from camping in the spot we had chosen. The air seemed humid, almost unclean. I sat before the fire and watched the flames playing around the twigs.

Suddenly I sat upright. I had been dozing, and it was with difficulty that I forced myself to waken. I felt as if iron bands shackled every muscle and my throat was parched. I tried to swallow in an effort to relieve the choking sensation I was experiencing, but my mouth, like my throat, was bone dry. I began to work my arms up and down, and then did likewise with my legs until I had gotten my circulation started sufficiently to rise. With difficulty, I made my way to Baron and Pickett.

When I played my flashlight upon them, I was startled by the greenish cast to their faces. I managed to waken Baron, but we could not get Pickett to stir. We worked over him for thirty minutes, but only groans rewarded us. Baron shook his head.

"I say, Trefon, that old fortune teller was right. There is something eerie about this place. I feel like I was on my last legs—all in. Don't you feel it?"

I told him how difficult it had been for me to waken myself. We decided that our safety lay in flight and we lost no time. We were not ashamed to acknowledge our fear of the unknown danger that threatened us. That is, Baron and I were not, for Pickett never wakened.

We took him back to Constantinople on an improvised stretcher and they diagnosed his case as malaria. His temperature was 105 when we reached the city. He lived just three days after our return. The third day after our fatal camp near the oasis, Baron and I broke out from head to foot with boils. Today I have the scars all over my body to testify to their severity.

Baron and I have often discussed this experience of ours in the valley of the "velvet death," and we have never been able to decide just what the peculiar death-dealing force could have been. Perhaps it was an odorless poison given off by some of the plants at night. The name, which the old hag had given, would suggest something stealing upon the sleeper unaware. But we have never been able to satisfy ourselves on the subject.

HENRY TREFON.

ARTHUR ARMSTRONG'S PREDICAMENT

FOR an hour I had been dozing before the fireplace in my den when I was awakened by the sudden slamming of the door and turned to see my friend Armstrong, pale and agitated, as he peered cautiously about.

"Bill," he whispered, "I've had a hideous experience; in fact, I don't know yet whether it was just a dream or real. It was so uncanny—so weird."

"Well, old top," I answered calmly, "what's up now? Another wild escapade?"

"No, Bill, there is some degree of seriousness about the matter," he declared, as he sat staring into the blaze. "Do you remember Yee Hong?"

"Who?" I interrupted, "that chink friend of yours? Gosh, he looked to you as a little tin Buddha; really though, he was a queer character."

"Queer? Heavens, man, he's possessed of the devil. Last night he invited me to dine with him at his quarters at Avondale Circle. There's really nothing extraordinary about that, for he's always extending me invitations, but last night was out of the ordinary. His apartment was decked out in typical oriental style. Well, before I was in the apartment five minutes, Yee Hong requested me to visit his new laboratory . . which I did, although the moment I was beyond the door I felt extremely uneasy.

"Rows of chemicals lined the further wall, and all about were instruments for experimental purposes. I had been in the room but a short time when I became aware of a thick, oily smoke, brown in color, arising from a small earthen crucible as if by command. The chamber became hazy; vaguely I heard Yee Hong explaining a certain acid, and then, of a sudden, the fog of oily vapor overcame me, my head was in a whirl, my knees wabbled and with a gnawing sensation at the pit of my stomach I fell unconscious."

"What was the stuff?" I broke in.

"I only wish I know. To go on, however, when I came to myself, I was seated at the supper table. All the specialties of the Orient were placed before me. I was hungry—strange to say—and did justice to the meal. Hong talked in an interesting tone, explaining the source of each delicacy of the East. Finally the coffee was served, black, stimulating Java coffee. My spirits had risen and I felt quite myself for about half an hour. Then my limbs became numb. Again that sensation of lightness returned and suddenly the glow of the Chinese lanterns dimmed. Yee Hong stared at me intently as if he were studying certain features about me—and then moved slowly away.

"Suddenly a dark-cloaked figure darted from somewhere—God only knows where—uttering excitedly in disconnected guttural syllables, 'Yee Hong—murdered—brother.'

"Then we were in utter darkness—two strong, sinewy arms seized me. I tried to cry out but my lungs refused to function. I struggled as one does in a dream. With superhuman strength I tore away from the vise-like grip of my hidden adversary. I seemed to laugh, to shout; I felt light headed, and then . . ."

My friend drew forth a short black-jack with an odd design carved near the end.

"This seems to link the supernatural with the real, Bill. I grasped this weapon; I must have wrested it from the hands of the cloaked figure. At any rate I swung it about my head like a tomahawk. As one walking in his sleep I wandered about the apartment until suddenly I struck something, something that had resisting power . . there was a thud . . then silence.

"Now, Bill, here is the uncanny part about my experience. When I came to my senses, I was in my own apartment, reclining comfortably in a Morris chair, a half-smoked cigar in the ash-tray at my side, a novel in my lap and the light of the reading lamp over my shoulder."

"Oh, Arthur, come out of it," I scoffed. "You probably had some Welsh rarebit for supper. Forget it, old top, forget it."

"But Bill, here's the black-jack as proof," retorted Armstrong indignantly. "I tell you something's wrong. My theory is that I was doped and . . "

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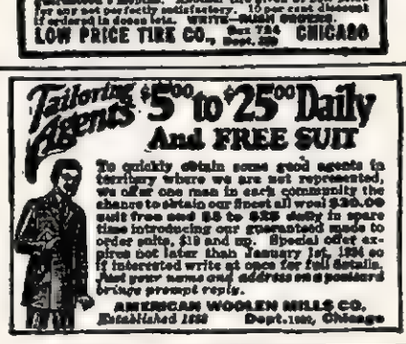

Just then the telephone drowned out further conversation.

"Hello," I said. "What's that? Another murder case? I'll come right over."

"Hey, Arthur, come back to life," I said. "Let's go over to headquarters. I've another inkling for a story."

In half an hour we entered headquarters.

"Good evening, lieutenant; what's up?" I asked.

Lieutenant Brunt looked solemn, his brow

(Continued on page 96)

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The Black Patch

(Continued from page 18)

ory the horrid thought that I had driven a human being to his death.

Then, filled with forebodings as to the identity of the body over which I had stumbled earlier in the night, I started to return. When I reached the house it was a long time before I could summon courage to enter. Once inside, however, I gained confidence and hastened upstairs.

The body was gone from the hall. But in the small room at one end—a mere closet—I found what I was looking for: the body of the man who had fallen in the struggle in the night—evidently he had dragged himself thither. His heart was still beating, and I carried him down stairs. He was heavy, and I groaned with relief as the weight slipped from my arms to the floor.

Then I looked at the face. Never shall I forget it.

It was my host! The black patch was displaced. It had covered a perfectly good eye!

I MUST have swooned at the sight, for the next I knew there were many men about me. They came from the village and had been notified by the old negress.

I was taken into custody and lodged for three weary hours in a ridiculously small place they called a "lock-up." At the end of that time I was led before a magistrate who took my statement.

Next morning I was informed that the body of David Warren had been found in the ravine. It confirmed my worst fears. I had driven to his death my own cousin!

That day the authorities obtained a confession from the man who had worn the black patch. He was unknown to them and stated that his name was Douglass. For about three months he had been employed by David Warren as an assistant in laboratory work. Having opened by mistake the first letter from our solicitor, Douglass learned of the legacy and kept my cousin in ignorance of it.

For two months he had confined David Warren under circumstances of the greatest cruelty in the little closet at the end of the hall. He insured the silence of the old negress by threats of death.

How Warren escaped from his room Douglass could not say. He suspected that the negress finally had dared to unlock the door. In any event, my cousin met Douglass in the dark just as the latter stepped from my room after his futile attempt to steal the gold. Then ensued the struggle in the hallway that I had heard and in which Warren stabbed the impostor with a knife—a wound that later resulted in the death of the criminal.

Although aware that we had never seen our Canadian cousin, Douglass wore the black patch fearing that we might know that David Warren had lost an eye.

After the inquest I hurried, shaken and trembling, to the hotel and packed the stolen Gladstone which had been found and returned to me. Then, feeling that I had a sufficiently vivid impression of America, I purchased a draft with the gold and started on the long journey home.

BLACK MAGIC

(Continued from page 34)

Horrible as was the drama of Gilles de Laval, the same horrors recur throughout the history of the Middle Ages, wherever Black Magic is found.

Gilles de Laval, with Prelati and Sille, was found guilty by the court and burned alive in the pre de la Magdeline, near Nantes; he obtained permission to go to the execution with all the pageantry that had accompanied him during life, as if he wished to involve in the ignominy of his downfall the ostentation and cupidity by which he had been so utterly degraded and lost.

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THE CASE OF DR. JOHNSTONE

(Continued from page 25)

"It can't be done," he whispered. "Neither the apparatus or the elements of which it is composed can be replaced. I'll not go into details, but it can't be done."

I groaned.

Then we talked a while. The conversation I shall not record. It was purely personal and had to do with matters that he wished me to attend to. Finally he said:

"Thanks, old man, and good-by!" and he extended a hairy paw. "I am going now to solve another riddle," and he stole out of the fateful room, leaving me alone with his body and—the ape.

THE next day, in several New York papers, the following news item appeared.

"Monkey Scares Automobilists

"While R. J. Farley was riding with Mrs. Farley and Mr. and Mrs. B. M. Greene on the North Shore road yesterday, they almost ran over a large monkey or ape that suddenly appeared in front of their car. Mr. Farley states that the animal acted as if it wanted to be run over. Mr. Farley stopped his car just in time, and the animal ran off. It was probably the same monkey that was later found drowned in the lake on the estate of G. L. Hirt, a Wall street broker."

Several days after this item appeared two eminent alienists committed Dr. Robert Belmore Johnstone to an asylum for the insane. Both of these gentlemen knew him, and after they had signed the commitment papers, one of them, a large gentleman who always spoke in a large way, remarked to me, "A very peculiar case, Doctor!—a very peculiar case. I really cannot understand it. Even if the psychosis has been of sudden development, it is most bizarre and entirely different from any that I have ever seen. It would seem as if the man's brain had been changed into that of a beast—a simian, I would say."

I held my peace. He never knew how close to the truth he came.

Now, when I hear, as I heard only the other day, that the soul, the individuality, is nothing more than the sum of the reactions of the ductless glands—that the ego can be resolved into a chemical formula, I turn away; for I *know differently*.

SUNFIRE

(Continued from page 58)

trio, lay also dead, her withered remains sealed up in a crypt of the pyramid.

But Ama-Hotu, Lord of Day, has been worshiped in many lands. Invariably has he survived his worshipers; outlived a multitude of fellow-gods as well. The empty shrine of Huac, the drying segments of Corya, made no difference at all in the glory of Ama-Hotu.

Four hard-working humans had retreated before his potency. In one of the ancient pyramidal dwellings they lay about in pajamas, sweated, drowsed, and waited for the undisputed Lord of Day to go seek his victims elsewhere.

All morning they had been at work taking the measurements, photographs and notes which were to make the name of Widdiup famous. Sigsbee, however, was not among the toilers. The gray hydro-airplane was missing from the derelict fleet.

"Miss Enid's pyramid," yawned Waring after a time, "was a wonderful find!"

No one disputed this. He redistributed his mass to a more comfortable posture.

"We never had a chance, you know. First to last—not the ghost of one!"

Otway looked up with a flash of philosophic gray eyes behind the shell-rims.

"I am entirely willing," he said, "to surrender all the honors to Dr. Widdiup's memory."

"Of course you are! So'm I willing to surrender writing it up. TNT was willing—we all were—to surrender the diamonds stored in the pyramid's crypts. Benefit of starving Armenian orphans. Splendid idea. Girl with eyes like hers, bound to think of it. Sig is willing to surrender himself. That is, if she'll have him. Ex-actly! First to last—not a chance!"

"The treacherous spirit of Kuyambira-Petro," began Tellifer—and for the first known time in his life broke off as if for lack of ideas to continue.

"Quite right," approved his friend. "Treacherous cannibal wizard, not worth mentioning. Half-ton diamond cut to broil you alive—easy. Pyramids—monsters—night-hags—burning pits—got a chance with all of 'em. But a girl like Miss Enid—never! Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy! The penalty of being fat and forty! Declined with thanks for the air-trip. Yet I've flown and Sig hasn't. What's your trouble, John B.?"

"I was just thinking, sir, that maybe I might have tried a little harder to get her to take me. Before the War, after I quit the Buffalo Bill show, I used to make exhibition flights in a little old Antoinette I got off a flyer that broke

$1,000 Reward

IN a dirty, forlorn shack by the river's edge they found the mutilated body of Genevieve Martin. Her pretty face was swollen and distorted. Marks on the slender throat showed that the girl had been brutally choked to death. Who had committed this ghastly crime? No one had seen the girl and her assailant enter the cottage. No one had seen the murderer depart. How could he be brought to justice.

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his neck in it. I had a good deal of experience. Mr. Sigsbee means well, but I can't see what real good he could be in case of accident."

"With her airplane and selected captive, she will arrive in Manaos," spoke Tellifer, the prophet. "I know that she will, for she is a very wise and practical person: she refused to take me! Dr. Otway, I presume you also are among the declined-with-regrets?"

"I am not." The philosophic eyes twinkled again. "In the first place, there was only one of us who deserved to be chosen. And in the second, I had already engaged myself to collect this material for the Widdiup book. But at least, if we are not helping her to make a flight, we are saving her the need of risking another one back here. And the honor of that is something!"

"It is much," agreed Waring, very meekly.

THE END

AUTHOR'S NOTE.—When the book to be entitled "Recent Discoveries Pointing to Confirmation of the Theory of Egyptian Origin for South American Aborigines," collated from material gathered on the spot by four faithful captives, and accredited to the posthumous fame of Dr. Alexander Widdiup, is published, it will be a worthy tome of great interest to archaeologists. But I doubt if in its pages will appear the incidents of this tale.

The surrender of Alcot Waring was honorably adhered to. On his return to New York he sadly reported, "No material."

Young Mr. Sigsbee has not had leisure to tell a word of it. He is devotedly engaged in keeping up with the inherited disposition of Dr. Alexander Widdiup—an exciting occupation which suits him perfectly.

Mr. Theron Narcisse Tellifer is far too proudly impractical to commit his weird thoughts and adventures to the cold, definite keeping of paper and printer's ink.

But John B. is a very good friend of mine—and John B. told it all to me!

THE TALISMAN

(Continued from page 63)

Imagine, then, my disappointment when in the morning I thrust my hand into the pocket to find it empty.

"Mitsu San," I turned to the amah who was ordering my room, "you must remember that Japanese charm I had all these days." And proceeded to describe it. "Maybe you have seen it or perhaps it fell out when you were brushing that dress? I have lost it and want to see it again very much."

"*Wak arimasen* (I don't understand)," she replied indifferently, and I turned angrily away. When a Japanese suddenly fails to understand English it is a certain sign he or she does not wish to understand.

Yet after my coffee I decided to use all patience and diplomacy I could lay claim to and interview Mitsu San once again. I somehow felt sure she knew more than she wanted to tell. But when I glanced, in passing, through the window I beheld Mitsu San hurrying down the Bluff toward the water-front. Decidedly luck was against me.

But I would not acknowledge myself beaten. The charm was in my pocket yesterday. For the matter of that, it had been there all these days, brushing or no brushing. I knew Japanese servants rarely if ever take anything belonging to a foreigner. Maybe the charm had been dropped somewhere on the premises and I might still be able to recover it.

I did a bit of quick thinking. Then I went downstairs for a talk with the owner of our boarding-house.

"Mrs. Brown," I began, "I have lost a very valuable—"

"In my house? Impossible!" exclaimed that good lady with a great show of horror.

I hastened to reassure her.

"It was just a wooden Japanese keep-sake of no value whatever to any one but myself. It has been mislaid entirely through my fault. I beg to note this and not lay the blame on servants. Yet I want to recover it very badly and am prepared to offer a money reward to the person who brings it to me whole—or *broken*."

"This is very unusual," replied the flustered Mrs. Brown, "I shall ring for the housekeeper. She may be able to advise us."

Soon the housekeeper, a very matter-of-fact Scotch woman, appeared. I repeated to her what I had said to Mrs. Brown.

"Are you speaking of that wooden chip you showed your friends the other day?" she inquired. I hastened to assent.

"Why, I have seen it half an hour ago in the servants' quarters," she said.

I felt a surge of excitement shoot through me.

"Mitsu San was just wrapping it up in a piece of white paper when I happened to enter her room. I recognized it at once, but thought you had given it to her to throw away. For you see it was broken clean through the middle."

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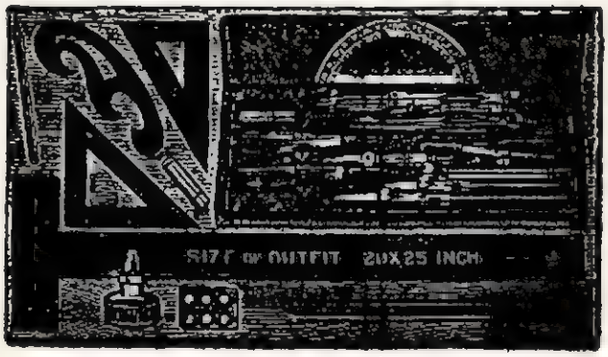

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THE GORILLA

(Continued from page 61)

breaking open the door. Involuntarily I drew back from the horrible sight that met my gaze.

Sprawled on the floor lay the body of my friend. Tightly clutched in his right hand was the automatic I had laid on the chiffonier. His head lay in a dark pool of blood, that still trickled from a jagged torn hole in the throat!

"My God, sir! Look!" my servant gasped, pointing with shaking finger toward the window.

Jerking my eyes from the gruesome sight at my feet I looked toward the window.

A repulsive horror gripped at my vitals as I gazed at the thing that lay on the floor beneath the window. With blood trickling from its mouth lay the body of a huge gorilla! As the light shone on the misshapen head it revealed a long scar that ran from the corner of the mouth straight back over the left ear.

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TRYING to save the kite that had cost him so many hours of hard labor, cost the life of a small, 11-year-old barefoot boy in Harlem. The kite became entangled in some electric wires. The lad climbed a telegraph pole to release it, and in so doing his shoulder came in contact with an electric cable carrying 11,000 volts. He fell to the street. Still conscious, a piece of the kite tail clutched in his hands, he was taken to a hospital. One hour later he died.

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THE CAULDRON

(Continued from page 87)

furrowed by thought. At length he answered.

"Queer case, this," he said. "Man found murdered at 81 Avondale Circle. No clues whatever."

I glanced at Armstrong and saw the blood receding from his lips. Then he pulled himself together.

"I would like to see the victim," he said quietly.

We went into the morgue and looked at the dead man. It was Yee Hong.

"We'll go up and visit the premises," I said quickly, anxious to get Armstrong away from the police station before he collapsed, as I could see that he was trembling violently.

When we arrived at Avondale Circle the police were already in charge of the house and I saw on the table a black-jack, exactly like the one Arthur had taken from his pocket. It was covered with blood and hair. I remembered Arthur's story of swinging the blunt weapon. Could it be possible that he had in some way returned it? But the one he had bore no signs of having been used. The question remained unanswered.

"We have found no one here," said the officer in charge. "The only possible clue we have is this." He handed me a handkerchief in one corner of which was the initial "A."

"That doesn't mean anything," I said hurriedly. "Yee Hong entertained lavishly and many people visited his famous laboratory."

"The laboratory!" exclaimed the officer. "Where is it?"

I led the way to the tiny door concealed beneath rich oriental tapestries, Arthur trailing along like one stupefied.

Hardly had we entered the door than we were attracted by a movement in one corner which was in almost total darkness. Going closer, we discovered a gleaming eye, and a hand extended holding a glittering dagger. I caught the wrist, and with the help of Arthur and the officer we dragged forth the body of a small man completely draped in black.

"Me Yee Hong brudder,' he whimpered.

We hauled him further into the light and through the narrow passage to the outer room. Without more ado, he was taken to the station and locked up. Later he was tried and acquitted, proving that he had killed his brother in self-defense. However, until after the case had been tried I kept Arthur out of town, fearing that some new evidence might crop up which would incriminate him.

It was during this period that I frequently wondered what Yee Hong's intentions had been concerning Arthur when he entertained him with incense and burning oil.

I also deduced during many long, lonely evenings before my fire, that Arthur must have grabbed the black-jack which had a replica, when he left the house in his dazed state of mind, for there is no doubt but what he passed through at least part of the adventure.

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Agents find it no work at all to sell this amazing invention—the Oliver new improved Oil-Gas Burner. They just show it—taking only one minute to connect it—then light it. And the sale is made! This new invention is its own salesman. It sells itself! The Oliver Oil-Gas Burner is the most timely thing that could be put out. It dispenses entirely with coal and wood when both are now high-priced. It burns the cheapest fuel—oil. It saves a woman work now in times when she is looking for just such things. Just as much or as little heat as wanted, off and on instantly by simply turning a valve.

The Secret of Big Money

Of course, now that you know the facts, you yourself can understand why this new invention is going over like wildfire! And you can understand why F. W. Bentley made $215 in one day. Why J. Carnegey made $1,000 in one month, and why hundreds of other agents are cleaning up big, too.

These men know the secret of big money. They know a good thing when they see it and and they know that the time is ripe for this new Oliver improved Oil-Gas Burner. They know that this age of high-priced coal and wood makes it necessary for some substitute. They see ships and locomotives being run by oil and big buildings being heated by it. And they know that an invention that makes use of this cheap fuel for every home—and yet does it so as to give more heat than coal or wood—is the thing they want to tie up to.

Big Profits Quickly Made

You too can use this secret of big money. You do not need to be a high-powered salesman. The Oliver's amazing features sell it for you. When people see it they know at once that it is the thing they want. You will realize that this is a proposition that will pay you as big money as it does others. We have a definite number of open territories which we are ready to dispose of to those who act quickly. Every territory allotted is filled with big money opportunities. And this big money comes easily. Because not only does this invention practically sell itself on sight but when you have sold one this one will sell several others as soon as your customer's friends and neighbors see it. And through our special plan you get credit and commissions for every sale in your territory.

You can also make big money just by using your spare time. Note how N. B. Chelan made $43 in one evening.

Coupon Brings Full Offer

If you want to make at least $5,000 a year easily, mail this coupon now for our offer. We are not making any extravagant claims about this. We do not have to. We believe that your common sense will indicate a good proposition to you when you know about it. We want to give you the facts. Won't you write us? And by doing so quickly you will be allotted an exclusive territory with private selling rights.

The coupon will bring you the facts and will save you writing a letter. But mail the coupon at once.

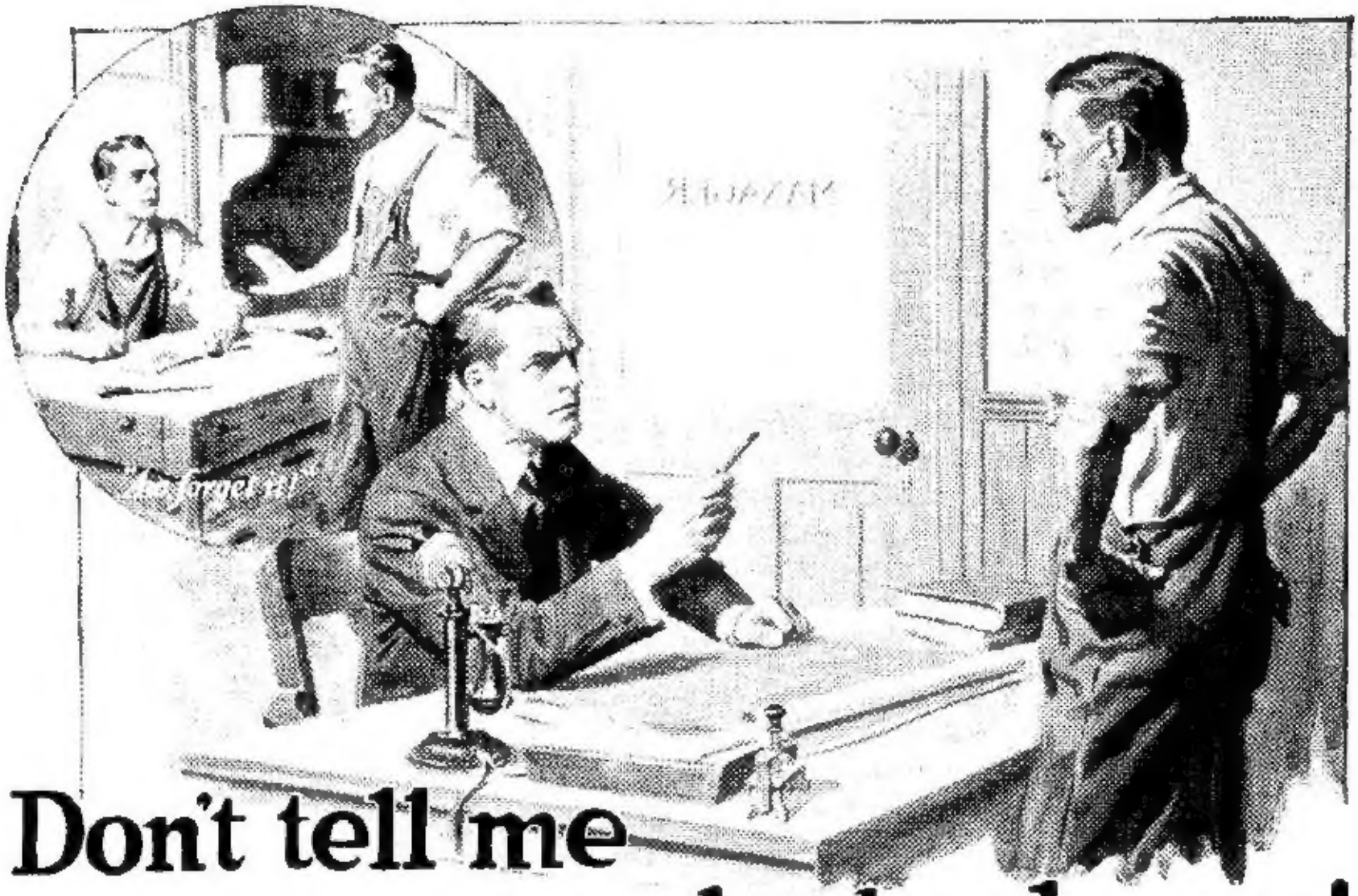
Oliver Oil-Gas Burner Co.
2416-U Oliver Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Please send me full facts about how I can make at least $5,000 a year representing you in my territory. Also your plan if I just wish to make big money in my spare time.

Name_____

Address_____

OLIVER OIL-GAS BURNER COMPANY
2416-U Oliver Building, St. Louis, Mo.



Don't tell me you never had a chance!

"Four years ago you and I worked at the same bench. We were *both* discontented. Remember the noon we saw the International Correspondence Schools' advertisement? That woke me up. I realized that to get ahead I needed special training, and I decided to let the I. C. S. help me. When I marked the coupon I asked you to sign with me. You said, 'Aw, forget it!'

"I made the most of my opportunity and have been climbing ever since. You had the same chance I had, but you turned it down. No, Jim, you can't expect more money until you've trained yourself to handle bigger work."

There are lots of "Jims" in the world—in stores, factories, offices, everywhere. Are *you* one of them? Wake up! Every time you see an I. C. S. coupon your chance is staring you in the face. Don't turn it down.

Right now over one hundred thousand men are preparing themselves for bigger jobs and better pay through I. C. S. courses.

You can join them and get in line for promotion. Mark and mail the coupon, and find out how.

— — — — — — — TEAR OUT HERE — — — — — — —

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2164-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING DEPARTMENT

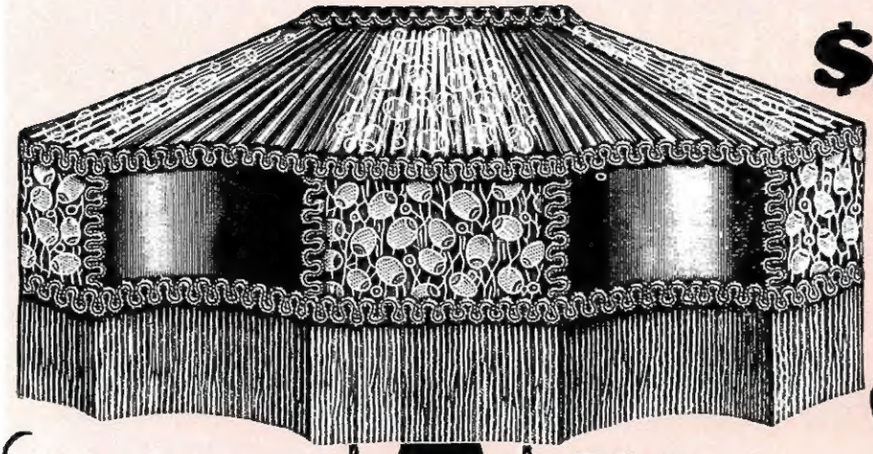
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Personnel Organization
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Business Law
- ☐ Banking and Banking Law
- ☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
- ☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ Business Spanish ☐ French
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Better Letters
- ☐ Foreign Trade
- ☐ Stenography and Typing
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Civil Service
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ High School Subjects
- ☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT

- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Lighting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineer
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Railroad Positions
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ Civil Engineer
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Metallurgy
- ☐ Steam Engineering
- ☐ Radio ☐ Airplane Engines
- ☐ Architect
- ☐ Blue Print Reading
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ Plumbing and Heating
- ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ Automobile Work
- ☐ Navigation
- ☐ Agriculture and Poultry
- ☐ Mathematics

Name .....
Street Address 6-26-28
City ..... State .....
Occupation .....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.



$1.00 Down

Brings This

Floor Lamp With *5th Ave.* Silk Shade

Here is something you have always wanted—a beautiful floor lamp with handsome and elegant Fifth Avenue silk shade—to add an extra tone of elegance and luxury to your home. On this generous offer you can see just how this floor lamp and silk shade will look in your home, without risking anything. Send only $1.00 with the coupon below, and we will send it complete to your home on approval, equipped for use with either gas or electricity. We take all the risk.

30 Days Trial

When the lamp outfit comes, use it freely for 30 days. See how beautifully the colorings of the handsome silk shade blend and harmonize with everything in the home. How *useful* it is, too—so handy for reading, can be moved around with ease to furnish a beautiful light and rich warmth and coziness to any room in the house. If after 30 days trial you decide not to keep the lamp, just return it at our expense and we will refund your $1.00 deposit, plus any freight or express you paid. You cannot lose a single penny.

$2.00 a Month

If you discover that this lamp is a tremendous bargain at the price we ask and you decide to keep it, send only $2.00 a month until you have paid the total bargain price of $19.85. Yes, only $19.85 for this luxurious lamp and silk shade complete. Compare this value with anything you could buy locally at anywhere near the same price—*even for spot cash!* Straus & Schram gives you this bargain price and almost a year to pay. We trust honest people anywhere in U. S. No discount for cash; nothing extra for credit. *No C. O. D.*

Price Slashed!

Decide now to see this beautiful floor lamp and silk shade in your home on approval on this price smashing offer. Think how the nickels and dimes slip away for useless things; save them for something worth while that will give satisfaction for years. Send coupon with only $1.00 now! Satisfaction guaranteed.

Send Coupon NOW!

STRAUS & SCHRAM, Dept. 3936 Chicago, Ill.

Gas or Electric

The Lamp—

Comes equipped for choice of gas or electricity. Has 2-light Benjamin socket for electricity only, with 8-foot silk cord ready for use; or comes with 6-foot rubber hose, burner, mantle and chimney for gas.

Mahogany Finish

Standard is 60 in. high, 3 in. in diameter. Highly polished French mahogany finish.

The Shade—

Made in Fifth Avenue design, 24 in. in diameter, of delft blue silk, shirred top, alternating plain and fancy art silk panels. Twelve panels in all, tinsel braid border, with four inch Chenille fringe. American beauty shirred lining. The harmonious color scheme gives effect of red light shining through a blue haze—a rich warm light. Shipping weight, 27 pounds.

Marshall Silky Fringe Pull-Cords

Also pair of Marshall silky fringe cords with 3½ in. silky fringed tassels, giving an added luxurious effect.

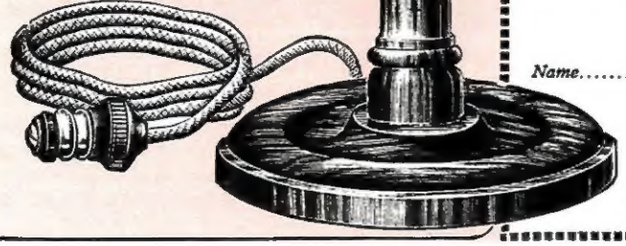
For gas use, order by No. G6332NA.

For electricity, order by No. G6333NA.

Send only $1 with the coupon, $2 monthly. Total Bargain Price for lamp and shade, $19.85.

Free Bargain Catalog

Shows thousands of bargains in home furnishings: furniture, jewelry, rugs, curtains, phonographs, stoves, dishes, aluminum ware, etc. All sold on easy terms. Catalog sent free, with or without order. See the coupon.



MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

STRAUS & SCHRAM Dept. 3936 CHICAGO

Enclosed find $1.00. Ship special advertised Floor Lamp and Silk Shade as checked below. I am to have 30 days free trial. If I keep the lamp, I will send $2.00 a month. If not satisfied, I am to return the lamp and shade within 30 days and you are to refund my $1.00 plus any transportation charges I paid.

☐ *Gas* Floor Lamp No. G 6332NA, $19.85.
☐ *Electric* Floor Lamp No. G 6333NA, $19.85

Name.....

Street, R. F. D. or Box No......

Shipping Point.....

Post Office..... *State*.....

If you want ONLY our free catalog of home furnishings, mark X here ☐